TOM - CALL RAQUEL
MARVEL Comics
$1.50
ONLY 25¢
30TH ANNIVERSARY 1962 1992
THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
MARVEL COM
epic comics

MARVEL
Age
120
JANUARY 1993
$1.00 US
$1.25 CAN
70p UK
TENTH
ANNIVERSARY
ISSUE

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

MARVEL AGE

Tom DeFalco
Editor in Chief
Mark Gruenwald
Senior Executive Editor
Carl Potts
Marvel Executive Editor, Epic
Bob Budiansky
Marvel Executive Editor, Special Projects

Steve Saffel
Editor

Lia Pelosi
Editorial Assistant

Joe Caponsacco
Michael Kraiger
Designers

Alan Davis
Mark Farmer
Cover Artists
Renée Witterstaetter
Colorist
Joe Caponsacco
Marvel Age Cover Colorist

Craig Anderson | **Glenn Herdling**
Richard Ashford | **Marie Javins**
Tom Brevoort | **Terry Kavanagh**
Karl Bollers | **Kevin Kobasic**
Joey Cavalieri | **Mike Lackey**
Bobbie Chase | **John Lewandowski**
Hector Collazo | **Marc McLaurin**
Chris Cooper | **Hildy Mesnik**
Kelly Corvese | **Al Milgrom**
Dan Cuddy | **Matt Morra**
Don Daley | **Sarra Mossoff**
Tom Daning | **Mindy Newell**
Barry Dutter | **Fabian Nicieza**
Eric Fein | **Mark Powers**
Danny Fingeroth | **Michael Rockwitz**
Sholly Fisch | **Evan Skolnick**
Jaye Gardner | **Mort Todd**
Suzanne Gaffney | **Rob Tokar**
Pat Garrahy | **Tim Tuohy**
Glen Greenberg | **David Wohl**
Bob Harras | **Nel Yomtov**
Consulting Editors

John Romita | **Frank Percy**
Art Director | **Kris Renkewitz**
Steve Geiger | **Wild Bill Wylie**
Managing Art Director | The Raiders

Joe Kaufman
Book Designer

Virginia Romita
Traffic/Production Manager
Dawn Geiger
Assistant Production Manager/Designer
Dannyboy Carr
Maria Parwulski
Typesetters
Jack Abel
Proofreader

Cindy Emmert | **George Roussos**
Designer | Cover Colorist
Paul Becton
Color Corrections

Steve Alexandrov
Ariane Lenshoek
Kevin Tinsley
Cover Coordinators

Rob Caroselia
Jesus Gonzalez
Camera Technicians

Darren Auck | **Steve Dutro**
Jon Babcock | **Ed Lazellari**
Letterers | **Davide Sharpe**

Steve Bunche | **Jim Hoston**
Johnny R. Greene | **Jerry Kalinowski**
Mechanical Artists | **Edward Murr**

This issue of MARVEL AGE is dedicated to the memory of Carol Kalish, and to Peter David. Without them, there would be no MARVEL AGE, and without them, the comic book world would be a very different place, indeed.

Ten years ago the direct market, populated by those all-purpose comic book specialty stores, was just starting to take shape. Comic shops were just beginning to infiltrate our culture. Over the intervening years, those shops have grown and evolved to provide a vibrant marketplace for the variety of material that has sprung forth. Those shops owe a great deal of their prosperity to Carol and Peter, who did everything in their power to nurture that growth in the most delicate years.

In the early 1980's, Carol and Peter *were*, to all intents and purposes, the Marvel Direct Sales Department. From their vantage point, they saw a need — the need for a publication that would bring the reader inside Marvel, to spotlight what's in store for the future. And so they sought to create MARVEL AGE.

I doubt that even Carol and Peter could ever anticipated the kaleidoscopic activity that would follow in the first decade of MARVEL AGE's existence. Truly, this past decade has been the most astonishingly active one in the history of comics. It isn't until you sit back and review the stream of events that you realize how many incredible things have happened.

Thus, when determining what to do to note MARVEL AGE's 10th birthday, I decided to make my "contributing editors" earn their credit (you'll find their names elsewhere on this page). I asked them to list the ten events or influences that have most affected Marvel Comics over the last ten years. We tallied the resulting votes, and so you have Bob Sodaro's insightful feature article "Ten Years After," found elsewhere in this issue.

As Bob rose to the challenge, so did our cover artist, Alan Davis — for he accepted the assignment of *illustrating* those events and influences in one wraparound piece. The result is amazing, and I am eternally grateful to him for his superhuman effort, part of which was executed during his family's first vacation to the United States! (Can *you* spot the ten?)

At that point, only two things remained undone. The first was to pose an important question to our regular MARVEL AGE columnists — given the events of the last ten years, what cataclysmic events do you foresee for the *next* ten years. The millennium is approaching rapidly, and the entire world is changing daily. How so comics?

The second task is yours. Given your point of view as a comic book aficionado, what do *you* foresee for our medium between now and the turn of the century? How will the new trends, technologies and creative innovations affect our favorite art and literary form? I open our letters page to your insights, and in doing so ask that you be succinct, to allow as many of your fellow readers as possible room for their views.

For my own prediction, I predict the next decade is going to be like riding a roller coaster — with all of the dizzying excitement you might expect.

— Steve Saffel
Editor

Arthur Weiner
MIS Director
Judy Sottile
MIS Manager

Christopher Ebel
Manufacturing Pit Bull

Dahlia Aponte | **Josie McCain**
Christine Aurillia | **Tony Matlas**
Bernadette Ayala | **Mary "Mac" McPherran**
Heide Balaban | **Rosa Rosario**
Al Bensew | **Pam Rutt**
Mark Bernardo | **Stu Schwartzberg**
Dan Buckley | **Marti Silber**
Matt Connor | **Jeff Simons**
Paul Curtis | **Christine Slusarz**
Alison Gill | **Sam Springle**
Barry Kaplan
Friendly Assistance

Jackie Aguila | **Karen Corbo**
Carol Piatt
Rights and Permissions
Lou Bank
Director of Sales/Direct Market
Skip Dietz
Direct Sales Manager/Co-op Publications Coordinator
Dean Rohifing
Direct Sales Manager/Distributor Liaison
Bruce G. Costa
Direct Sales Manager/Retailer Liaison
Craig Kunaschk
Assistant Distributor Liaison
Geri-Lynn Buckholz
Assistant Retailer Liaison
Kevin Tang
Patient Catalog Editor

Terry Hernon
Direct Sales Copywriter
Georgiana White
Customer Service
Andrea Goldberg
Mid-West Field Representative
Mike Martin
West Coast Field Representative

Jim Sokolowski
Director of Sales/Newsstand
Bob Kenkas
Manager of Business Development
Laurie Stecky
Assistant Marketing Manager Newsstand Sales
Cynthia LeBron
Newsstand Sales Administrator
Scott Donigian
Distribution Representative On the Northern Road
Craig McWilliams
Distribution Representative On the Southern Road

Matt Ragone
Director of Specialty Sales
Sven Larsen
Marketing Manager
Jim Brennan
Advertising and Promotions Director
Tammy Brown
Advertising Manager
Dana Moreshead
Mariano Nicieza
Advertising Art Directors

Ralph Macchio
Methuselah

MARVEL AGE® Vol. 1, No. 120, January, 1993. (ISSN #8750-4367) Published by MARVEL COMICS, Terry Stewart, President; Stan Lee, Publisher; Michael Hobson, Group Vice President, Publishing. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. Published monthly.

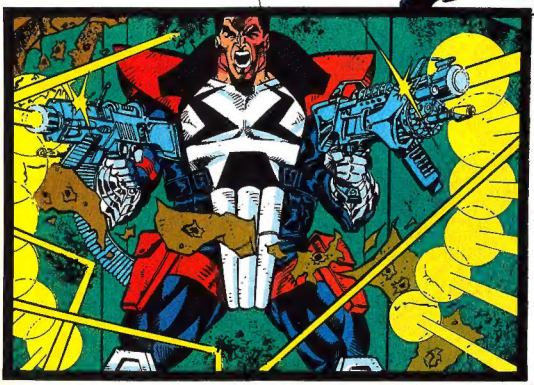
Copyright © 1992 by Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. All rights reserved.

Price $1.00 per copy in the U.S. and $1.25 in Canada. Subscription rate for 12 issues: $12.00 U.S.; $24.00 foreign and Canadian subscribers must add $8.00 for postage and GST. GST #R127032852. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. MARVEL AGE (including all MARVEL titles and prominent MARVEL characters featured in this issue and the distinctive likenesses thereof) is a trademark of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO MARVEL AGE, c/o MARVEL COMICS, 9TH FLOOR, 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. Printed in USA.

Up Front

ITEM! The holidays are right around the corner and what better way to help celebrate the festive season than with the all-new **MARVEL HOLIDAY SPECIAL.** This 80-page yuletide present of nine never-before-printed stories comes wrapped in a special all-around cover by Art Adams. These tales include a brand new Stan Lee *Spider-Man* story illustrated by Steve Lightle, a *Wolverine* story by Larry Hama and Michael Golden, a Jim Starlin and Ron Lim *Thanos* saga, a Peter David *Doc Samson* yarn and a *New Warriors* story by Fabian Nicieza and Darrick Robertson.

With a seasonal pinup gallery spotlighting the talents of Rurik Tyler, Darren Auck, Dave Cockrum, Ron Garney, Ernie Chan, Kerry Gammill & Sal Buscema, and a unique essay by Barry Dutter on Marvel Christmas stories of the past, the November release of the **MARVEL HOLIDAY SPECIAL** occurs just in time to make it, as Editor Renee Witterstaetter said, "The perfect stuffer for any Marvel fan's stocking."



ITEM! On a crime-ridden world of the future, where there are no heroes and criminals can buy their way out of prison, one man has taken the law into his own hands — **THE PUNISHER 2099.** With a special foil-stamped cover, the premiere issue of this regular series introduces a Punisher from another time period, but with a familiar mission.

When his family is murdered by a wealthy madman who is later released by the authorities, policeman Jake Gallows decides to dispense his own brand of justice. Armed with an arsenal of high-tech weaponry and adopting the name of the legendary crime-fighting vigilante, Jake becomes a one-man army waging a war against those who think they are above the law. Written by Pat Mills and Tony Skinner (**MARSHAL LAW, 2000 A.D.**) and illustrated by Tom Morgan (**ALPHA FLIGHT, CAPTAIN AMERICA**), **THE PUNISHER 2099 #1** goes on sale in December.

ITEM! The Punisher only kills those who deserve to die. But, in **GHOSTS OF INNOCENTS**, a two-part, 48-page Punisher bookshelf by Jim Starlin (**INFINITY WAR**) and Tom Grindberg, Frank Castle must learn to live with the consequences of witnessing the deaths of innocents and feeling great responsibility for those deaths. When a crazed drug dealer kidnaps a busload of people, the Punisher tries to rescue them, but, fate dictates that he can't. Injured himself with a concussion, he now finds himself trapped in a living nightmare; haunted by their questioning spirits. The only way to put their souls to rest and save what's left of his sanity is to kill the real person responsible. Unfortunately this won't be easy because that person is Wilson Fisk, the Kingpin of Crime.

Part 1 of **GHOSTS OF INNOCENTS** will be out in January.

THE PUNISHER

SHADOW RIDERS

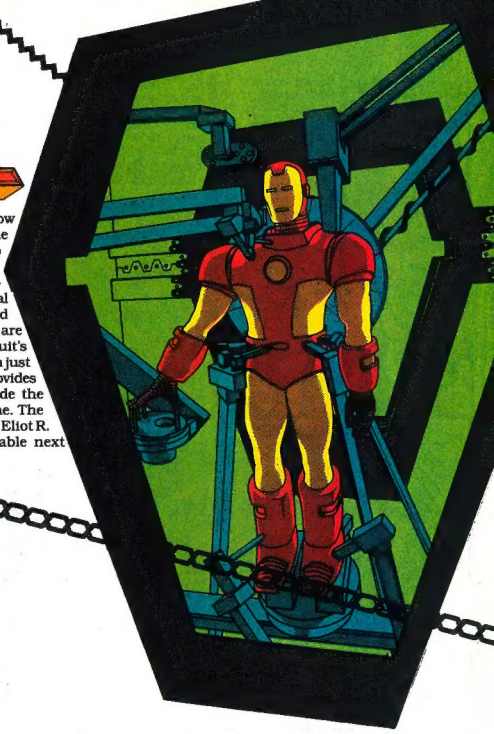
ITEM! In December, Marvel UK presents THE SHADOW RIDERS, a four-part limited series about a motorcycle-riding strike force of "dead" soldiers.

The Shadow Riders are a group who, while on the brink of death, were resurrected by Vorin, a mysterious Techno-Wizard. Employing a combination of Earth sorcery and alien magic, Vorin has, over the years, enlisted various groups of "corpses" in his personal war. The Shadow Riders, his latest group of cybernetically-enhanced soldiers, utilize high-tech motorcycles and futuristic weapons to fight this war against MyS-Tech.

MyS-Tech is run by humans who have been granted immortality and unearthly powers by Mephisto. In return, they operate crime rings, plot assassinations, overthrow governments, sell illegal munitions and employ a group of time and space traveling pirates known as the Warheads.

With a little help from Ghost Rider and Cable, the Shadow Riders take on MyS-Tech next month in THE SHADOW RIDERS limited series.

THE IRON MANUAL



ITEM! Everything you ever wanted to know about Iron Man's armor is presented in the **IRON MANUAL**, a 32 page in-depth look into the inner workings of the invincible Avenger's cybernetic shell. Propulsion systems, optical sensors, jet boosters, internal climate control, micro-circuitry, on-board computers, repulsor rays and armaments are all shown, diagramed and explained by the suit's creator and occupant, Tony Stark. More than just technically informative, the manual also provides a greater understanding of the man inside the metal and the humanity within the machine. The **IRON MANUAL** is written and illustrated by Eliot R. Brown (**PUNISHER ARMORY**) and available next month.

MARVEL year-in-review '92

ITEM! The *informed* fan knows what happened in the Marvel Universe this past year: Ghost Rider got another book, Spidey had a birthday, Tony Stark had a deathday, the new 2099 titles were introduced, and all the good guys fought themselves in the "attack of the bad guys who look like us except they have really sharp teeth" war.

But, what about the stuff that *wasn't* mentioned, like Ant-Man's 30th anniversary, the 2099 books that *didn't* see print, how the Human Torch *really* felt about being married to a Skrull? With his perpetually putrid health, what diseases could Tony Stark have contracted if he hadn't died first? And, what's the deal with Northstar?

These daring topics and more are covered in the all-new, all-different, all-*satirical* MARVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW '92. This 48-page color magazine wrap-up of 1992 features 16 articles, 8 *decidedly different* advertisements and a shameless Punisher cover by John Romita, Jr. Also included are new works of art by Art Thibert, Chris Bachalo, Ron Garney, Chuck Frazier, and Javier Saltares.

Evan Skolnick, the editor of **MARVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW '92**, explained that this year's edition has "gone *all-funny*. We kept the funniest stuff and jettisoned the rest. We're turning the Marvel Universe on its ear by proving that no one pokes fun at Marvel Comics better than Marvel does."

MARVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW '92. It's not the same old same old — it's the *new* old same old!

– *Matt Morra*

You wanna know WHO the MOST IMPORTANT GUY at Marvel Comics was in the LAST DECADE?
Simple--it's the SAME guy who's gonna be even MORE important in the NEXT ten years--ME!
No, I'm NOT some hotshot cartoonist, or some whizbang editor, or even some genius marketing guy. Me, I'm a TAILOR.
Oh, I know--for years good and bad guys alike've been stitching together their OWN uniforms, but the LATEST fashion trend's been a little TOO MUCH for all those NOVICES...
LEATHER JACKETS. EVERYONE'S wearing 'em--NOMAD, RAGE, JOHNNY BLAZE, The GHOST RIDER, The PUNISHER, and more MUTANTS than I can remember.
Some of 'em are STANDARD BLACK LEATHER, others are MODIFIED to COMPLEMENT the basic costume. All I know is ten years from now, the Marvel Universe is probably gonna look SOMETHING..like..THIS...
"HEY! THING! What's with the SILK SMOKING JACKET and FEZ?"
Buddy, I don't FOLLOW trends, I SET 'em...
by FRED HEMBECK

FRED HEMBECK © 1992 Fred Hembeck character and the distinctive likenesses thereof is a trademark of FRED HEMBECK.

Tom Talks

"To The Future—!"

It's always been my personal belief, borne out by the considerable evidence of history, that change is inevitable. It may be upsetting, exhilarating, disorienting, thrilling, horrifying, magnificent, and downright nasty at times...but, alas, change happens! You can treat it as a friend or an enemy, an annoyance or an opportunity. However, since it's going to occur no matter how you feel about it, you might as well embrace it...and that includes our own beloved industry.

The comic book industry has changed quite a bit in the last ten years. We have seen vast strides in content, format, marketing and even distribution...and we're going to be seeing even more. Much more! The tempo of our evolution is going to keep increasing at an ever rapid rate. And it's up to this idiot in chief to take on the Cassandra role, and to make a few perilous predictions...

Ten years ago, the vast majority of comics reached our readers through a distribution chain which involved newsstands, mom-and-pop grocery stores, drug stores and soda shops. If a store had a magazine rack, the odds were pretty good that it sold comic books. Everyone knew about comics. It was easy for anyone to spontaneously pick one up. You couldn't avoid us.

Of course, there were some major problems with this system. The comic racks were small, and that limited the number of titles you could produce. Comics were a sideline to these store owners, a very small percentage of their gross...so they didn't pay an awful lot of attention to us. Distribution was pretty spotty. You sometimes had to journey to five or six stores before you found all the different comics you wanted every month. And, worst of all, this method involved a returns system which caused hundreds of thousands of unsold comics to be shredded each and every month.

Today, most comics are sold in local stores which are devoted to them. The titles reach fans faster and more consistently than ever before. A lot of the old limitations are long gone. Since these store owners make most of their income from the sale of comics, they constantly encourage the publishers to produce new titles...which are even more popular and, consequently, better selling. New publishers and titles are springing up on almost a daily basis to fill this ravenous demand.

Of course, there are also some problems. The major one is that only comic book fans shop in comic book stores. We're only preaching to the converted. We're becoming a cult.

THE BOSSMEN

by RICK PARKER

WHAT'S THE MATTER, TOM? IS SOMETHING BOTHERING YOU?
IT'S THIS DARN TIE, MARK...IT'S JUST... I DUNNO... TOO CONSERVATIVE OR SOMETHING...
YOU'RE RIGHT, BOSS! AS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST COMICS PUBLISHER, YOU NEED A TIE BEFITTING YOUR STATUS--ONE THAT REFLECTS YOUR POWER, YOUR INFLUENCE IN THIS MEGABUCKS INDUSTRY!
HERE--! TRY THIS ONE ON... IT WAS SENT IN BY AN ARTIST FROM NEVADA WHOSE DRAWINGS YOU REJECTED..
TOM DEFALCO THE CHEESE MARVEL COMICS 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016
LATER..
WELL, WHATTAYA THINK...?
HMMM... IT'S GOT POSSIBILITIES... STAND UP ON THIS CHAIR AND LET ME GET A CLOSER LOOK...

The good news is that I can already see that changing. Forward-thinking store owners are creating interesting window displays, featuring mass market characters like BARBIE, *Garfield*, *Calvin & Hobbes*, TEKWORLD and CONAN THE BARBARIAN to lure unsuspecting new readers into their stores. And, if my prediction is correct, it won't end there! I believe that it's only a matter of time before these selfsame entrepreneurs slowly begin branching out. They'll start by putting small comic racks, which they will service themselves, into their local eateries, video stores and hobby centers. They'll make it easy for anyone to spontaneously pick us up again. Our cult days will soon be in the past. This will eventually enable us to produce a wider variety of material—comics for all types of tastes, ages and genres.

I believe that comic book formats will also keep evolving in the coming years. We have seen the relatively recent birth of graphic novels, bookshelf editions, hardcover MARVEL MASTERWORKS, and full color magazines like the MARVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW and the swimsuit specials. When I first joined the company a little over twelve years ago, Marvel had maybe four different choices in the way a comic could be printed. We now have almost sixty different publishing formats, which include a wide variety of choices regarding paper, page count, binding, color separation and printing process. These choices are only going to multiply geometrically with each passing year...and that's not counting the ten new formats we've already got planned for 1993!

As printing techniques become more sophisticated and formats get fancier, the craft of creating comic book stories will also face new challenges. The artwork of today is generally superior to art that appeared in comics as little as five years ago, and it's going to keep getting better. Obviously, there will always be a wide range of artistic styles and abilities in this industry, but the basic standard continues to get higher.

The reason has more to do with economics than sensibilities. Years ago, comics were considered a training ground for budding artists. They only worked in this field until they were "good enough" to move on to animation, advertising, comic strips or magazine illustration. Well, times have changed. Comic artists can now earn anywhere between a very "decent" living to a highly exorbitant one. Consequently, they're sticking around, and we're getting the benefit of all their experience and skill.

The same can be said about our writers. For the past few years, we've been studying how people read comics, and how their brains actually process our unique combination of words and pictures. Armed with this knowledge, we're constantly honing our craft in an unending quest for the perfect comic.

In general, people demand far more visual stimulation than ever before, and they want instant gratification. This means that comics will continually have to up their level of intensity in an image-driven story, increase the density of incidents which occur within a given issue, provide more sophisticated plots and themes for an ever-discerning audience, and finish it all within the context of a single story so that you don't lose your reader's attention between issues. *Whew!*

The content and style of comics will drastically evolve over the next few years...as will television, movies, novels, video games, CD ROM, and whatever else comes down the pike. However, one human need will remain constant. The desire for entertainment.

I doubt the comic book, as we know it, will survive the next century. However, comics as an art form... that unique and wonderful story-telling blend of words and pictures... will always be with us! Future comics may not be printed on paper. They may arrive at your house via fax, modem, disk or who knows what! I know I can't wait to see what comes next. Until then...

Thanks for being there!

- *Tom DeFalco*

Stan's SOAP BOX

Hi, Heroes!

Wow! It's hard to believe that **MARVEL AGE** is ten years old! This ol' mag sure carries its years well — doesn't look a day over nine!

Obviously, Sagacious Steve Saffel, our editorial caliph, couldn't let such a meaningful anniversary slip by without making it the theme for this landmark issue. And so, as we stand at the threshold of our second decade of **MARVEL AGE** magnificence, let's seize the opportunity to think about comicbooks in general and see if we can predict what the next ten years might have in store!

Unless you're a recent arrival from some other star system, you must have noticed that the comicbook industry has been growing by leaps and bounds during the past decade. While mighty Marvel still publishes far and away the best-selling group of titles, many other "independent" companies have appeared on the scene. These independents have served to broaden the field by introducing comics to many new readers, thereby increasing the total number of comicbook fans, which is a healthy sign of progress for all concerned. The more the circulation of comics rises, the more certain it is that other companies will want to try their luck at this creatively exciting and ever-changing field.

So, my first prediction is that each coming year will see more and more independent publishers getting into the act. Some will fall by the wayside, while some lucky others will grab the gold ring and become a meaningful force in the world of comics.

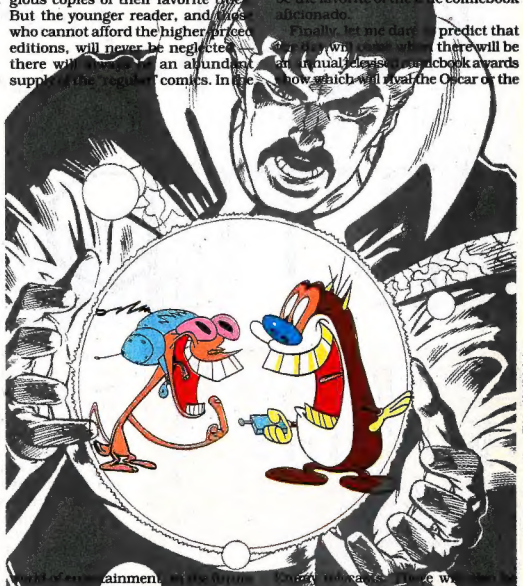
My second prediction concerns the artists, writers, editors and all those who actually create and produce the product which seems to be taking most of the civilized world by storm. As sales of comics continue to increase, more and more creative people will enter the field. This has been happening for the past ten years, with a veritable avalanche of talented new artists and writers appearing on the scene, and I expect the ranks to continue to increase, which is certainly the best thing that could happen on behalf of fandom. The larger the pool of artists and writers, the better choices your editors can make, resulting in ever better concepts, stories and illustrations to amuse and amaze you!

But what *type* of comics does the future hold for us? How will the product itself change during the next ten years? Since none of us possesses a crystal ball (except Dr. Strange, and he hasn't been returning my phone calls lately), none of us can answer that with any certainty. However, there's no harm in making a few educated guesses.

As far as the physical appearance of the mags is concerned, since the age limit of our audience is continually expanding, the comicbook field will probably continue to publish an increasing amount of more expensive paperback and hardcover editions for those who want permanent, prestigious copies of their favorite titles. But the younger reader, and those who cannot afford the higher-priced editions, will never be neglected — there will always be an abundant supply of the "regular" comics. In fact, [illegible] become ever more varied and complex, allowing virtually all readers to find the type of illustrated stories that best suits their tastes.

Of course, distribution, too, will change as the next decade speeds by. There will be more comicbook stores than ever, and many of them will grow into large chains. The trend has already started. There are many cities today where one comicbook store owner has a number of branch stores. Comics are also, slowly but surely, finding their way into mass market book stores, although the more specialized comicbook store will always be the favorite of the true comicbook aficionado.

Finally, let me dare to predict that the day will come when there will be an annual, desired comicbook awards show which will rival the Oscar or the [illegible] world of entertainment. As for comics as an art form, as in the past, comicbooks will continue to be one of the of the least expensive pleasures available.



The Ren & Stimpy Show: TM & 1992 Nickelodeon

Now let's consider the strips themselves. You're probably aware that the quality and maturity of the stories throughout the comicbook field has undergone a great change during the past decade. Comicbooks today deal with a wide range of contemporary subjects, many in a thoughtful and sophisticated manner. A number of titles are now grittier and darker than they've been in the past, a reflection, perhaps, of today's movies and the headlines themselves. Each new writer, artist and editor brings his or her own viewpoint and sensibilities to each strip. In short, the wide range of subject matter and of the ways in which those subjects are treated will [illegible] comicbook reviews in newspapers and magazines. In other words, I confidently predict that we now stand on the threshold of a new quantum leap for comics — a leap that will put our once-humble medium on a par with motion pictures, television and the recording industry.

To those of you who've been with us since the early years, none of what I've said will come as a surprise. To those who may be new to comics, congratulations! You're entering fandom at a most exhilarating time, and be forewarned — in the next few years you're about to become a living part of media history! Now, what better way to close than by hitting you with the favorite phrase of Nostradamus himself, "Quot homines, tot sententiae!"

Excelsior.

– Stan Lee

TEN YEARS AFTER

It was a simple enough idea. Marvel Comics, as the publisher of numerous comicbooks,* magazines, trade paperbacks, graphic novels, the odd book or three, and other related print material, determined that the best way to support its own projects was to publish a comic-sized magazine that would focus exclusively on Marvel's publications. Hence MARVEL AGE was born.

By all accounts, it was the brainchild of Mike Friedrich, Carol Kalish and Peter David, who headed up Marvel's Direct Sales staff at that time. In today's market we don't think twice about Marvel (or any other comicbook publisher) having a direct sales staff, but things were quite different in 1982.

That there *exists* a direct sales market at all is almost exclusively the result of the hard work and prophetic vision of one entrepreneur, Phil Seuling. "Phil. . . through the sheer force of his personality — transformed the industry. . ." wrote *Amazing Heroes* founding editor Mike Catron. Phil saw the need for a better way of getting comicbooks from the publishers to the fans, and so began to buy directly from the various publishers and distribute to the growing number of speciality shops.

From those small beginnings, there are currently some 4,000 direct sales shops in the U.S. and Canada, and they represent a majority of Marvel's total comics sales, according to Lou Bank, Marvel's present head of

1982 1983

*Introducing Les Daniels' book Marvel: *Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics*, Stan Lee explains his use of "comic books" over the more generally used "comic books." The author of this article agrees wholeheartedly, and so has determined to utilize comicbook as one word rather than two, for comicbooks are a medium unto them themselves, not merely "books" that are "comical."

MARVEL AGE hit the stands without much fanfare the first week in January of 1982 and cover-featured *Crystar*, one of Marvel's toy tie-ins. The first couple of issues were edited by Carol, who quickly passed the reins over to Jim Salicrup, editor for the lion's share of the title. He then passed the torch to Reneé Witterstaetter with issue 105, and a brief eight months later, when Reneé, too, left the title, Steve Saffel slipped into the driver's seat.

As MARVEL AGE enters a second decade, the opportunity arises to take a look at the road traveled thus far and review the most exciting decade in the history of comics.

In the Beginning

When MARVEL AGE #1 hit the stands, it stood among AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #239, FANTASTIC FOUR #253, STAR WARS #70, ROM #41, MICRONAUTS #52, (UNCANNY) X-MEN #168, and NEW MUTANTS #2. Capital Distribution was about to get its feet wet by publishing *Nexus*, and First Publishing was expanding it's line by adding the newly-acquired *E-Man*. Marvel's main rival, DC, was seeking fan approval with *The New Teen Titans*, and *The Omega Men*.

Superman turned 45, Spidey turned 20 and all four of his titles — AMAZING SPIDER-MAN; PETER PARKER; THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN; MARVEL TEAM-UP; and MARVEL TALES — were placed under a single editor for the first time. That editor, relatively new to Marvel, was Tom DeFalco.

EPIC ILLUSTRATED, with Editor Archie Goodwin at the helm, was the magazine-format home of Marvel-published, creator-owned projects like "Marada the She-Wolf" and "Abraxas and the Earthman." Epic also released a new version of Mary Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN with superb Bernie Wrightson artwork.

The X-Men's adventures (by Chris Claremont and Paul Smith) were housed in but one solitary title. In 1983 Wolverine nearly married Mariko (now deceased), John Byrne launched the Canadian team of Alpha Flight in their own title, Tony Stark was battling with alcoholism, George Lucas's THE RETURN OF THE JEDI and INDIANA JONES were making their comicbook debuts under the Marvel banner, and Frank Miller's *Ronin* hit the stands from DC.

Miller's other work on DAREDEVIL and *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* provided an unexpected but fertile ground for numerous parodies, in particular for Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird, who effectively lampooned Frank and others with their small-run, self-published black and white comic book *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, first released in 1984.

Cross-Continuity Storylines

As the fan market grew, Marvel announced (in '84) the formation of *Marvel Press* to handle the publishing of portfolios, posters, and the like. That year also saw Stan Lee return to scripting (for WHAT IF #50 and AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #18), and then-Editor in Chief Jim Shooter developed a massive cross-continuity storyline that would ultimately involve nearly every title in the Marvel line, spawn a sequel, and generally effect the course of comics for the rest of the decade.

#1 IN A TWELVE-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES
MARVEL SUPER HEROES
SECRET WARS
75¢
1
MAY
CAN THE COMBINED MIGHT OF EARTH'S MOST POWERFUL SUPER HEROES DEFEAT THE ULTIMATE MENACE?!!

SECRET WARS, aimed directly at the heart of the expanding fan audience, marshalled the forces of Mar-

1984 1985

ufacturers, including Mattel, who issued a new line of action figures. The twelve-issue limited series illustrated by Mike Zeck and John Beatty altered the medium, as it tapped into fans' desire to see all their favorite characters brought together in a single epic. Its resulting ripple effect is still being felt in comics today (e.g. Venom and the current Spider-Woman).

The Glove of Power

In April of 1987, after nearly 10 years at the helm, Jim Shooter left his position as editor in chief and was succeeded by Tom DeFalco. A long-time comics enthusiast, Tom expressed his editorial approach thus: "This is an entertainment medium, and you can only be entertaining if you're having fun, and so are your readers." Tom counts among his top accomplishments the creation of the MARVEL MASTERWORKS library and "getting framed Marvel posters hung on the walls here at Marvel."

One of Tom's first executive actions was to appoint long-time Marvel historian Mark Gruenwald as executive editor. Since then, Tom has modified the structure of the editorial staff to better handle its ever-growing line of titles. In addition to Mark, Carl Potts (who succeeded Archie Goodwin at Epic) and Bob Budiansky were named as executive editors, and Bobbie Chase, Ralph Macchio, Danny Fingeroth, and Bob Harras were elevated to the position of group editor.

Each group editor handles a family of related titles (for example, Danny handles all the Spider-titles, while Bob oversees the X-titles.) Through this tiered editorship, better control is maintained over the comings and goings of the various characters of the Marvel stable (which, according to this year's annual report, numbers some 1,500 characters). Perhaps one of the most obvious and telling signs of Marvel's growth is the X-Men line.

From but a single X-Men-related comic in 1982, today there are seven ongoing X-books (not counting Wolverine in *Marvel Comics Presents*, nor the two planned X-titles for '93 or the limited series and special events also planned for the X-Men's 30th anniversary). It has been pointed out that, if the X-Men books were all spun off into their own company, they would be the second largest comicbook publisher in the country.

Heroes on the Big Screen

Due in part to the popularity of DC's *Dark Knight and*

As "regular" publications covered activities within the industry and related comicbook events in the mainstream (such as the Spider-Man wedding), more people began seeking out comics in specialty stores. As more fans were drawn to the field, so, too, were more publishers. At the beginning of this decade the significant players in the field consisted of Marvel/Epic, DC, Archie/Red Circle, First, Eclipse, WARP Graphics, Aardvark-Vanaheim, and Pacific. Today, while First, Pacific, and Red Circle may be gone, DC has added Piranha, while Dark Horse, Valiant, Malibu/Image, Mirage, Tundra, Comico, Innovation, Topps, Revolutionary, and many others have entered the fray. This list doesn't begin to account for the literally hundreds of publishers that have risen and fallen in the space of those 10 short years.

The Pulse of the Fan

Marvel's relationship with the fan market has always been symbiotic in that, as the market grew, it was aided and abetted by Marvel, which — naturally — grew along with the market. One of the persons most responsible for this hand-in-hand existence was Marvel's own Carol Kalish. Carol understood, as few before her, the importance of the direct market, and how to get down inside it and nurture it . Her tireless efforts in the burgeoning marketplace led to revolutionary programs including co-op advertising, distributor and retailer growth incentives, personal appearances and point of purchase display. Beyond her sales efforts, her accomplishments included the recently organized WAM! (Wild Agents of Marvel) fan club, and creation and editorship of the shared-universe SF anthology *Open Space*.

Her untimely passing in September, 1991 was a shock to everyone. It was as if comics had suddenly lost their best friend and most active proponent. Within the pages of the *Comics Buyer's Guide* came an outpouring of grief and heart-felt loss from people in all aspects of the business. Former Marvel Sales Director Ed Shukin, was quoted as saying, "The best decision of my entire career at Marvel was hiring [her]," while Marvel President Terry Stewart commented that it would be, "Hard to imagine a more tragic loss. . . "

Her patience and marketing savvy were legendary, and stories abound of how she would literally spend hours with store owners helping them understand the business side of the industry.

Marketing and the Direct Market

more seriously. This awareness, which had been growing slowly since the first *Superman* movie, also contributed to continuous celluloid activity with *Superman 2-4*, *Supergirl*, a pair of *Swamp Thing* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle* movies, *Howard the Duck*, *Dick Tracy* and *Batman* — which literally took the nation by storm as the decade came to a roaring close.

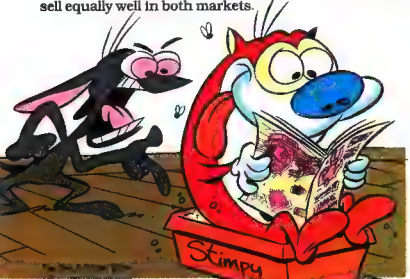
sionalize" the marketplace by helping educate comics specialty store owners to the various possibilities at their disposal. For example, "with the direct sales market, we are able to sponsor co-op ads," he explained. "We can't do that with the mass market. With the direct market we can help to get Spidey into the newspaper where he'll be more visible." Since there are more direct sales shops

in malls, strip malls, and shopping centers than ever before, and with these highly-visible shops within walking distance of video stores, pizza places and the like, comics are becoming even more accessible and thus the direct sales market is becoming a bigger and bigger chunk of the marketplace.

"The direct sales shops also give us a venue in which we can be more experimental with different genres and formats. It also helps us find out what is going to be profitable." Lou cited WILLIAM SHATNER'S TEKWORLD as a prime example. "TEKWORLD appeals to SF and *Star Trek* fans alike," he said. "These fans know they can find the book out in speciality shops."

Jim "Ski" Sokolowski, Lou's counterpart in the newsstand division, pointed out that, while X-Men is a best-seller in all areas of distribution, titles like G.I. JOE and ALF are no slouches. "When we first issued [those titles] they outsold the X-MEN in newsstand sales," he commented. The reason, Ski felt, was that while the collector/fan may have more sophisticated tastes, he is by no means the only type of fan out there. "I can sell more comics in airports than anywhere else, and there aren't many kids traveling by airplane." Ski pointed out that nostalgia is always a big draw with older, impulse buyers, many of whom are ex-fans who will often pick up a comic on a whim. He felt that while some of these people may be buying comics for themselves, they also remember what fun comics were, and are now buying them for their own kids.

One of Ski's goals is to convert the impulse buyer into a regular reader, and eventually move that person over into the direct market where they will be able to find a more varied group of titles. One series he feels will do just that is REN & STIMPY. "The guys in direct (sales) think that they'll have the biggest chunk of *Ren & Stimpy Show* fans, but remember, while it may have a cult status, it plays mostly on Nickelodeon on Sunday morning, where kids can watch it." He feels that it will sell equally well in both markets.



Sven Larsen of Marvel's newly-formed Marketing department noted that marketing was formerly the shared responsibility of sales and editorial. Once it had spun off into its own section, the Marketing department was able to devote all of their time into developing new marketing techniques. "We deal with market research and package design, further enhancing the efforts of

Different Formats for Different Folks

This attention to format and packaging is one change in the comicbook industry that has most affected the reader. The trend began in the early 1980's with projects like the EPIC ILLUSTRATED magazine anthology done in the tradition of France's *Metal Hurlant* and the U.S. equivalent, *Heavy Metal*. Experimentation continued with the birth of the graphic novel (Marvel's first was Jim Starlin's 1982 *The Death of Captain Marvel*), the bookshelf or "prestige" format first made popular by *The Dark Knight Returns*, the trade paperback collection (such as *X-Men: Dark Phoenix Saga*), hardcovers featuring new and old material (including the *MARVEL MASTERWORKS*), and many other formats and packages constantly being developed.

Freedom to experiment with packaging led publishers to change their procedures for developing a new project. A decade ago projects appeared in the standard comic book format, as a graphic novel, or in a magazine (such as EPIC ILLUSTRATED or SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN). Today, when a project is initiated, the editorial and manufacturing teams put their heads together to determine what the audience will be, what formats will be available, and which would be most appropriate for the subject matter. Concerns range from the type of artwork to be reproduced to the profitability at various print runs.

Into this mix the various decision-making parties can opt to use a specific paper stock, develop a special cover enhancement (foil, embossing, etc.), or determine something be placed inside the book (posters, pop-ups, trading cards, etc.). The ultimate goal is to make the book as enjoyable as possible to the broadest possible audience.

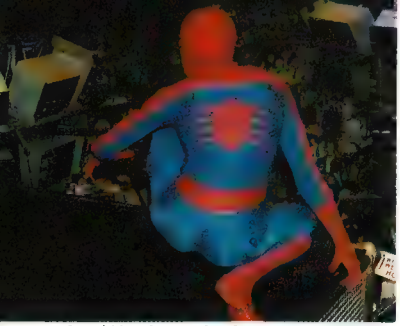
As these formats and enhancements have caught the attention of the media, the world outside comics has come to realize that the comic book industry is, indeed, a vital part of the publishing world. This recognition has led to even more far-reaching changes.

In the Public Eye

88 1989 © 1988 Cadence Industries sold Marvel Comics to

cards, or something similar). Still, enhancements *per se* are not his only concern. Rather, his job encompasses how he can help attract attention to significant editorial events. "If *Spider-Man* always had a holographic cover, it would soon no longer be of interest to the fans," he pointed out. "My goal is to better respond to the consumer's needs, whatever they may be."

The Punisher and TV programs like *The Wonder Years*) for between $40-50 million. New World owned the company for about three years, only to resell it in 1989 to The Andrews Group. Then, in mid-1991, Marvel went public. The stock (and Spider-Man) appeared on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange in July 1991, opening at just under $20 a share. Over several months it rose to



more than $60 a share, split, then rose again to more than $30 per share, where it hovers as this article is being penned.

Now that Marvel is a publicly traded company, it is even more in the media spotlight. Still, as Editor in Chief Tom DeFalco pointed out, this is not the first time that Marvel has been a "public" company. "When we were owned by Cadence, and then again under New World, we were publicly held, but our results were not reported separately. We didn't have our own stock, as we do now." Tom went on to say that being a public company hasn't affected the way the Marvel editorial staff does its business of creating comicbook adventures.

"We're in the entertainment business, and we have responsibilities to our audience. Also, we have to plan our storylines so far in advance there's no way that day-to-day fluctuations in the stock market can affect what we're doing. Likewise, there's no way our stories should affect the market, because by the time the books hit the stands, we're already doing something else."

Group Vice-President Michael Hobson thoroughly enjoys Marvel's new-found visibility and feels it is helping bring Marvel new acceptance on the newsstand, citing as proof the addition of comicbook racks in Wal-Marts, Walgreens, and many other major chains across the country. According to Hobson, mainstream acceptance of characters like Spider-Man and the X-Men has been growing for a long time. "During my first year we did about $3 million in the direct market, and we thought that was great. Now if we were to do that little in a month, it would give us all heart attacks," he said laughingly.

Michael went on to explain that, during the '40's and '50's, comics were sold exclusively in "mom & pop" shops. When America moved to the suburbs, and magazines were then sold primarily in supermarkets, comics never quite made the transition. Since comics were always viewed as a pop-culture item, they didn't have much credibility, and since they were so cheap, they couldn't compete for space with higher-ticket items like slick glossies. This helped give rise to the direct sales market as comics fans had to find places that would cater to them.

Here Tom stepped in with a corroborating theory, "The generation that grew up on Stan's universe is grown now and in positions of power (like buying for the chains) and is looking to recapture or retain something of its past."

1991 Marvel Across the Pond 1992

The growing acceptance of comics, and the influx of British writers and artists into the U.S. talent pool, convinced Tom and others to establish a British version of the Marvel Universe. Marvel had established a publishing beachhead in England back in 1972 with *The Mighty World of Marvel*, a weekly which re-packaged previously published American material. This led to the creation of Captain Britain (by Chris Claremont and Herb Trimpe), and was followed in varying degrees throughout the '70's by other original material for the British audience.

During the '80's, British creators like Pat Mills, Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons, Alan Davis and Paul Neary worked on various projects for the UK audience, projects including The Black Knight, Night Raven, and the revival of Captain Britain. In 1991, it was determined that the time had come to begin in earnest to create a true British version of the Marvel Universe. Thus, Paul Neary, John Freeman and the other editors at Marvel UK worked in close concert with Tom DeFalco, Bill Jemas, Ralph Macchio and the other Marvel US editors to create the group of British heroes that were introduced earlier this year. These characters, including Death's Head, Motormouth, Digitek, and the Knights of the Pendragon battle the evil MyS-Tech organization in adventures combining "chaos magic and New Age philosophies," Neary said. Marvel US characters, including The X-Men, Spider-Man, Deathlok, Nick Fury, and their peers, regularly cross the pond to join in these adventures.

A Hall of Records

As *Marvel Age* has progressed from it's earliest years to the present, Marvel has constantly established new records, broken them, and gone on to exceed everyone's expectations. The top was blown off the industry in 1990 when a new, adjectiveless SPIDER-MAN comic broke all previously established records by selling almost three million copies. This record was broken the following year by X-FORCE, which sold nearly four million copies, and was smashed again by the adjectiveless X-MEN, which sold more than eight million copies in 1991, making it the best-selling comic in history.

The licensing and marketing of Marvel characters have also reached new heights as new items are increasingly developed and shipped to the retail shelves. Two of the most popular are the growing line of action figures by Toy Biz (which added nearly 30 new characters to its line this year — an unprecedented move for a line of toys not supported by any TV or movie tie-in), and a best-selling line of Skybox trading cards. The card area promises to heat up even more now that Marvel has bought the Fleer trading card company.

Comicbook fans love to define the various eras or ages of comicbook history, to spend hours determining when the Golden or Silver age began or ended, or even to attempt to determine precisely what age we're currently in. However, for some, the last part is easy. While it may sound corny, for many who have spent time residing in the house that Stan, Jack, Steve and company built, naming the current age is easy.

· It is simply the Marvel Age.

- *Robert Sodard*

MARVEL
2099
by Joey Cavalieri, Arthur Nichols and Ken Lopez
THE STREETS ARE DIRTY, DEPRESSING... FILLED WITH THE DREGS OF HUMANITY.
SOMEONE'S GOT TO KEEP THIS HUMAN FLOTSAM AND JETSAM FLOWING THROUGH THE SYSTEM.
THAT'S THE PUBLIC EYE'S JOB.
THIS IS THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE WORLDS.
THE SYSTEM WORKS.
IF SOMEONE THINKS THEY CAN DO A BETTER JOB...
..I'D LIKE TO SEE THEM TRY IT.

Mark's REMARKS

Humanity needs heroes. Heroes have been a part of every culture since before recorded history—we know this because by the time someone got around to recording certain legends, those legends were already thousands of years old. All the cultures of earth incorporate certain heroic attributes into their heroic legends—bravery, resourcefulness—other heroic attributes are specific to the culture from which the hero sprang forth.

Heroes were once the products of anonymous storytellers, each of whom embellished or interpreted the basic legend in his or her own way. Once modern fiction writing began, after the introduction of the printing press, specific storytellers could be credited with the invention of specific heroes, such as Dumas's The Three Musketeers or DeFoe's Robinson Crusoe, or with the purposeful reworking of legendary characters—Pyle's Robin Hood or White's King Arthur. These specific storytellers were products of the cultures they lived in and geared their heroic tales, whether consciously or not, to reflect the ideals of their cultures.

Fast forward to the comic book medium of illustrated stories. Again we have specific storytellers gearing their heroic creations to the culture (or some subset thereof) in which they live. The super hero genre is, in my opinion, one of the best places to study the evolution of the modern hero. Why? Two reasons. First, there are a darn many heroes in comics, there is an abundance of source material. Second, the comic book medium as a whole, not just the super hero genre, is largely a reactive rather than a proactive medium. Comic book creators *react* to trends in the other media and in the rest of the culture around them rather than start trends that the rest of the media and the culture then react to.

Not everyone will agree with me. They'll point to something like Frank Miller's DAREDEVIL and say "How about this? No one was doing anything like it at the time. It was a trendsetter." But for every such example I can provide literary and film influences and a trend in comics as the title was influenced any given hero. Don't get me started.

To state that the super hero genre is reactive is not to say there's anything wrong or sinister or elemental about it. Everything, it makes the study of modern archetypes and trends far more practical. By the time a trend manages to work its way into comic books, it is definitely a full-blown trend and not just a quirk of somebody's iconoclastic taste.

So, as we view the continuum of super hero types in the marketplace, these questions occur to me: what trends do we find, how do these trends reflect our culture, and can we predict what super hero types will be in vogue the rest of this decade and into the next? Though super hero comics first appeared in the late 1930's, they did not really get going until the early '40's, so let's start there.

The cultural climate of the U.S. in the 1940's might best be characterized by patriotism and a consensus that we were righting a wrong on a war on foreign soil. Most of the major heroes of the decade—Captain America, Superman, Captain Marvel, the Human Torch, etc.—were out to please in that consensus world, and were viewed as the soldiers were: righteous fighters in a righteous fight. It didn't matter that it was a conceptual stretch for some that—why should an alien like Superman or an android like the original Human Torch really care about the war between opposing groups of human beings? Even heroes like the previously antagonistic Sub-Mariner were pressed into ideological service for the righteous cause of America and its allies. The prevailing sentiment of the '40's was simplistic in its "good versus evil," "us versus them" distinction, and the heroes of the era reflected this.

Our culture's perception of life had yet to become too complicated, and our comic book heroes were boys and girls we could get behind and believe in, for they knew right from wrong.

The cultural climate of the U.S. in the 1950's might be described as being a product of Cold War and nuclear paranoia mixed with a sense of post-war prosperity—something like the combination virtually guaranteed extinction. Only the very strongest, most commercial heroes survived—Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, and they did so in part by having their more innocuous adventures possible. Marvel's heroes—Cap, Sub-Mariner, and the Torch—succumbed to the times, were mothballed or became late-'50's only to emerge again.

I was alive during part of the '50's and I can't fully understand why American culture was so deadset against super heroes. Unlike present-day Americans who might have turned out to be great comic book sympathizers, our super heroes—as works of fiction—could have no secret or sinister sides that might suddenly come to light. Still, Americans like the psychologist Frederic Wertham, upon observing that certain juvenile delinquents read comic books, concluded that comic books caused juvenile delinquency, and did their unlevel-headed best to interpret comic book heroes in their worst possible light. Consequently, comic book super heroes experienced their biggest setback in their existence, before or since.

The U.S. cultural climate during the 1960's was tumultuous—we had the Kennedy and King assassinations, civil rights and women's movements, the emergence of the youth movement, the riots in the streets, the escalation of our country's involvement in Vietnam, and so forth. In the midst of this, comic books tended to be a boon companion. Marvel's heroes were the perfect archetypes of the '40's a ragged sense of humanity—flaws, for characters made the heroes more like the fans, society at large and them. At first, Marvel's villains found themselves in stories that would have worked well in the '50's—mad Communists and nuclear threats, but by the late '60's these were phased out in favor of homegrown foes.

Besides offering heroes who were less-than-perfect, Marvel presented villains who were less than fully evil. This greying of the moral boundaries was emblematic of the '60's and proved to be the legacy for all succeeding generations of super heroes, so far.

The cultural climate of the U.S. in the 1970's was in certain ways reactionary to the '60's. Idealism and activism gave way to cynicism and self-absorption. For the first time in history a President resigned. American

troops withdrew from Vietnam, peace movements gave way to self-help therapies, rock music was housebroken into disco, and Americans were held hostage in Iran. Marvel's heroes of the '70's were, perhaps not surprisingly, mostly anti-heroes, updates of Victorian Era monsters or their cinematic successors (Dracula, Frankenstein, the werewolf) We also broadened our range of mainstream heroic types with the addition of ethnic heroes (Power Man, Black Goliath, and Shang-Chi) and female versions of previous heroes (She-Hulk, Spider-Woman, Ms. Marvel). Both the Punisher and the new X-Men premiered, though they would not establish themselves as major players until the '80's.

The cultural climate in the 1980's was earmarked by a very popular president, a resurgence in national pride, the death of disco and the rise of rap, the emergence of the yuppies and their emphasis on the accumulation of personal wealth, revolutionary modifications of the mass media (the VCR and CD), and the overburdening of our various social institutions, resulting in more homelessness, urban crime, etc.

The new heroes of the '80's had two major influences from within the field: the first was the new X-MEN series which made mutants the most popular kind of hero. Although the X-Men had been around since the '60's, it was in the '80's that they found their audience. There was something about being born different that touched a nerve with a vast audience in a way that accidental acquisition of powers no longer seemed to. Perhaps it was a glorified metaphor for disaffected youth, a generational thing for all those who felt they were, in some way, different from their parents and peers and society in general.

The X-MEN also set the trend for the noble hero "going bad" or "going dark" with the "Dark Phoenix" storyline. Since then, countless heroes have become darker, more sinister versions of themselves, sometimes semi-permanently, and characters who have never had a light side have come into vogue (such as Wolverine and the Punisher).

The other most highly influential comic series of the '80's—or at least the title that had its finger on the pulse of the national climate before any other one did—was (believe it or not) G.I. JOE. Before this title, the way to increase a character's popularity was to increase their power. After the Joes debuted, the way to increase a character's popularity was to give them a bigger or meaner weapon. This paramilitary hardware fascination, best exemplified by the Punisher, now permeates the super hero genre, influencing every super hero title, including the mutant books, and even characters who would never use a gun.

So what is the cultural climate of the '90's? It's difficult to predict this early in, but the trends of the late '80's—mutants and guns—look like they're here to stay. It seems to me the world is perceived as harsher place than ever before and, to remain credible, heroes need to be portrayed as excessively aggressive in order to keep up and cope with the times. I fear that society, at best, is going to stabilize with our present day levels of urban violence, economic instability, and moral ambiguity, and more than likely all these things are going to get worse.

I personally can't see how, in light of the awareness the media affords us, our culture is going to ever be able to go back to simpler values, more tranquil times, and a more cut-and-dried morality. Our heroes, then, are going to reflect this, becoming even darker and grimmer as a whole. On the other hand, maybe there's a limit to how unrelentingly dark we can make our heroes, before they stop being heroic and stop providing us escapism from the realities of our cultural climate.

This is going to be an interesting decade. The fate of the super hero as we know it may be decided in the next few years.

- Mark Gruenwald

WEAK
That's All Folks!
MARVEL COMICS
Stan Lee
Jack Kirby

The Official Map of the *New*

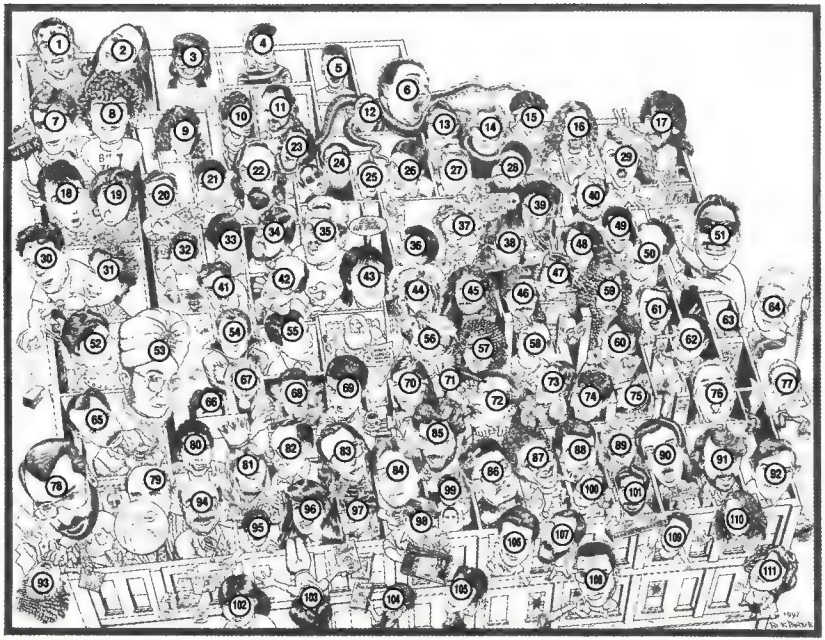
MARVEL BULLPEN

1992 Edition

This year, following months of painstaking effort, the Marvel staff moved into the *rebuilt* Bullpen and Editorial Offices.
(Key on next page)

The Official Key to the *New* MARVEL BULLPEN

1992 Edition



1 - John Romita
2 - Renee Witterstaetter
3 - Rosa Rosario
4 - The Intern
5 - Karl Bollers
6 - Paul Becton
7 - Ralph Macchio
8 - Pat Garrahy
9 - Christine Aurilia
10 - Ericka Mitchell
11 - Kevin Kobasic
12 - Lisa Trusiani
13 - Kelly Corvese
14 - Dawn Geiger
15 - Virginia Romita
16 - Joe Kaufman
17 - Dan "The Man" Carr
18 - Bob Harras
19 - Lisa Patrick
20 - John Galvin
21 - Marcus Jones
22 - Steve Saffel
23 - Bonnie Berryman
24 - Mort Todd*
25 - Johnny Greene
26 - Glenn Herdling
27 - Jaye Gardner
28 - Steve Bunche
29 - Steve Geiger
30 - David Wohl
31 - Bob Budiansky
32 - Glenn Greenberg
33 - Mindy Newell
34 - Tom Brevoort
35 - Jesus Gonzales
36 - Ed Murr
37 - Ericka Moran
38 - Steve Dutro
39 - Steve Vrattos
40 - Steve Alexandrov
41 - Alberto Concepcion
42 - Evan Skolnick
43 - Rob Carosella
44 - Jerry Kalinowski
45 - Dave Sharpe
46 - Darren Auck
47 - Ed Lazellari
48 - Ariane Lenshoek-Pinheiro
49 - Frank Percy
50 - Wild Bill Wylie
51 - Rick Parker
52 - Carl Potts
53 - Eliot Brown
54 - Mark Bernardo
55 - Eric Fein
56 - Kevin Somers
57 - Kevin Tinsley
58 - John Babcock
59 - Spencer Lamm
60 - Thomas Velazquez
61 - Jared Osbourne
62 - Dahlia Aponte
63 - James Felder
64 - Hector Collazo
65 - Mark Gruenwald
66 - Josie McCain
67 - Mary McPherran
68 - Tony Matias
69 - Richard Ashford
70 - Marie Javins
71 - George Roussos
72 - Joseph Caponsacco
73 - Cindy Emmert
74 - Michael Kraiger
75 - Jim Hoston
76 - Jack Abel
77 - Mark Powers
78 - Tom DeFalco
79 - Terry Stewart
80 - Barry Kaplan
81 - Hildy Mesnik
82 - Matthew Morra
83 - Joey Cavalieri
84 - Mike Rockwitz
85 - Don Daley
86 - Marcus McLaurin
87 - Danny Fingeroth
88 - Rob Tokar
89 - John Lewandowski
90 - Fabian Nicieza
91 - Craig Anderson
92 - Terry Kavanagh
93 - A Freelancer
94 - Mike Hobson
95 - Millie Shurtiff
96 - Bobbie Chase
97 - Sarra Mossoff
98 - Barry Dutter
99 - Tim Tuohy
100 - Dan Cuddy
101 - Nel Yomtov
102 - Christine Siusarz
103 - Lisa Trusiani
104 - Alison Gill
105 - Chris Ebel
106 - Tom Daning
107 - Mike Lackey
108 - Christian Cooper
109 - Carlos Lopez
110 - Lynaire Brust
111 - Suzanne Gaffney

CENTER

There's a lot of excitement these days over creator-owned comics. For more than ten years, Epic has published books to which the creator(s) retain both copyright and trademark. We're proud to have published some of the most exciting and compelling concepts ever presented in comics from during this past decade — and the best yet to come. The creator-owned area of comics is exploding and running so rapidly that it's difficult to predict what the next ten years will bring -- but let's take a stab at it anyway!

Creator-owned comics cover a wider range of genres and subject matter than most company-owned properties do. One of Epic's primary goals is to put out comics in a wide variety of genres and subject matter. We believe strength and growth come through quality and diversity.

Sure, we produce creator-owned action/adventure titles and super heroes, but there are also titles featuring realistic dramatic situations (like **BLOODLINES: A TALE FROM THE HEART OF AFRICA**), humor (**GROO** or **LANCE BARNES: POST NUKE DICK**), westerns (such as the Moebius **BLUEBERRY** series of graphic novels), science fiction and 'space opera' (**AKIRA**, **ALIEN LEGION**, and **DREADLANDS**). Horror titles like **HELLRAISER** are popular, as are fantasy properties (**WEAVEWORLD**, **ELFQUEST**). Some projects defy classification, such as **METROPOL** by Ted McKeever, who was referred to as the Kafka of comics by editor (and actor) Ralph Macchio! Books that combine genres are also evident — **MUTATIS** is a science fiction, horror, detective, mystery series. It seems like we've got everything covered, right?

Ah, but there's still plenty of room for expansion. The comics medium is *at least* as versatile as film when it comes to variety. For most of its history, comics have been seen by the American public as escapist juvenile literature dominated by super heroes. Now the creator-owned comics movement is helping to slowly expand the general public's expectations of the medium by putting out a diverse range of material.

Expanding the audience is essential to the future of industry, and creator-owned comics are very important agents in this cause. Ideally, someday you'll be able to consistently (instead of sporadically) see *all* of the genres on comics racks, alongside a full spectrum of dramatic and historical titles.

If the comics industry can consistently produce its own quality dramatic fiction, we'll have the means to reach almost every reader of every age. Imagine comics of subject and subtlety equal to novels like *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The comics equivalent of 'upscale' TV shows like *Hill Street Blues* or *L.A. Law* could be blockbusters — *if* the general public could be induced to try them.

Here's where we run into a 'Catch-22' — publishers can't expect to expand the market place unless they produce the material to do so. However, since the general public doesn't expect the comic publishers to produce anything besides super hero material, the audience to support non-super hero publications won't be around when they're most needed to make publishing such material financially worthwhile. Epic, being part of and backed by the largest most successful North American comics publisher, has the resources to be a leader in producing quality comics outside of the usual genres. Even so, a book needs *readers*.

Word of mouth is the best advertising, so you can help by turning your friends and family on to comics that appeal to their interests (for that we'll be eternally grateful!).

Anyhow, it's my hope and prediction that the next decade will bring a more varied output of genres and subjects by the comics industry and that the American public will start to get wise to the potential of the medium.

Formats may vary greatly over the next ten years as we try to customize the best presentation for different projects. At some point we may start putting out comic books on CDs or other electronic formats. However, it's doubtful that electronic media will ever totally replace paper publications — physical comics just look and feel too good! Production and marketing techniques are always evolving so printing effects that are now considered too expensive may become commonplace. New effects we can't yet imagine will also evolve. The Marvel/Epic production and manufacturing folks are always looking for innovative ways to realize the creative visions of the artist and editors.

Some comics creators who achieve 'star' status these days use their selling power to set up special deals for themselves — as star Hollywood actors do. This, for the star creator, is a seemingly ideal situation — they get total control over their project. While there are some creators versatile enough to handle this responsibility well and who will produce quality work, many other star creators have weaknesses in a variety of areas and will have trouble making memorable work (at least memorable for the right reasons!).

Not all writers can draw, or vice versa. Not all creative people can edit. Not all creative people or editors can oversee the production and manufacturing stages properly. The key to consistent success is to put together a team of quality and qualified individuals that help the creator(s) fulfill his or her creative dreams to the fullest. A good editor on a creator-owned project is not a dictator. The editor acts as an objective observer who can

ALIEN LEGION

ALIEN LEGION TM & © 1992 Carl Potts

IF I'M EVER RELEASED I'LL HUNT YOU DOWN LIKE A... LIKE A...
DOG?
JUST SO LONG AS I GET MY MONEY.
LANCE BARNES: POST NUKE DICK
AKIRA
Carl Potts

LANCE BARNES: TM & © 1992 Stefan Petrucha & Barry Crain

point out plot holes, missed opportunities, structural problems, visual storytelling glitches and so on to the creator(s).

Most top quality creators are anxious for such input because it makes them and their project fulfill its potential. At Marvel/Epic we're proud to have some of the best editorial, production, manufacturing, promotion, and marketing people in the industry. This team helps make the creators' vision and hard work shine! This is one area we don't plan to do much changing in over the next decade!

These are exciting times for the comic industry — especially the creator-owned segment. All of us at Marvel/Epic are very proud of our varied and vast accomplishments but, quite honestly, you haven't seen anything yet! Stay tuned for news about Epic's '93 publishing plan. It full of our customary variety with a big emphasis in the spring on a wide range of new action adventure titles designed to give you a startling combination of image *and* substance brought to you by some of the industry's top talents!

Strange Adventures

After spellbinding Marvel readers for nearly 50 issues of his current title and some three decades overall, Doctor Strange would seem to be at the height of his powers — a pillar of the Marvel Universe. But in Strange's world of mysticism and illusion, mastery of one's power is tenuous at best — a reality which will be made strikingly clear as our hero reaches the milestone point.

As of DOCTOR STRANGE #50, a double-size extravaganza due in stores next month, the man dubbed the Sorcerer Supreme will find he can no longer lay claim to that title. Having encountered the likes of Thanos and Galactus during his recent cosmos-spanning role in THE INFINITY GAUNTLET and THE INFINITY WAR, Doctor Strange is about to suffer a power loss, one debilitating enough to bring him quite literally down to Earth.

This dramatic development will set a new course for the book, and will figure prominently into Strange's decision to team up with a whole new group of "Secret Defenders" in a monthly spin-off title. The new series is slated to premiere in January, just in time for the 30th anniversary of Doctor Strange's debut in STRANGE TALES #110.

"The gods who have given Doctor Strange his powers, i.e. the Vishanti and the hosts of Hoggoth and any other people he's called on before, are involved in their own mystic wars, and they want to enlist [Strange's] aid," editor Mike Rockwitz said. "Torn between his allegiance to Earth and to them, he makes a decision to refuse them.

"[As a result], they feel it's time to pay the piper."

DOCTOR STRANGE writer Len Kaminski, who joined artist Geoff Isherwood with issue #48, qualifies this turnabout by noting that, while Strange finds himself weakened by the angry mystics, he isn't completely disempowered. This, he said, will allow for an intriguing combination of old foes and new threats in the book.

"I'll have him coming up against things that previously he could have just waved his hand at and they would have evaporated," Kaminski said. "Now that doesn't work."

In the past when [Doctor Strange] had to do something enormous, he would frequently call on Agamotto or various other characters to lend him the power he needed to make it happen," he continued. "Now he doesn't have that power resource to draw on anymore—he has only his personal psychic and magical energy. He's not going to be so completely omnipotent. If he casts some enormous wide-ranging spell, it's going to tax him physically and, conceivably, if he tries to do something too big, he could die."

The Master of the Mystic Arts is made painfully aware of this danger when his newly-restrained abilities are put to their first test — battle with the now even more dread Dormammu. Strange emerges from the conflict shaken, convinced that he must locate new sources of mystic strength to help him continue his fight against the legions of darkness and evil. Driven by this aim, he sets out on a quest around the globe, a potentially year-long storyline which Kaminski and Rockwitz say will give the Sanctum Sanctorum and other traditional DOCTOR STRANGE trappings a much-needed rest.

"During that period we're not going to see the mansion at all," Kaminski said. "He's going to be out wandering the world, interacting with the outside for a change. And in the process he'll come across new threats and new mysteries and new guest stars."

"Doc will be getting out of the house a lot more," Rockwitz echoed jokingly.

As a result of the climactic clash with Dormammu, long-suffering Clea also will be ushered out of the storyline for a time, making for a sadder but ultimately more interesting Strange, according to Kaminski.

"Doc is not going to be a happy guy for the next year or so," Kaminski admitted. He went on to explain, "You've got a character like Doctor Strange whose main quality is that he uses magic to solve problems, and then half the supporting characters in the book also use magic. That seems to me to dilute Doc's uniqueness."

Exit Clea, enter Morbius the Vampire, whose new title Kaminski also scripts. The writer plans a major crossover for his protagonists in the near future, as Morbius drinks blood tainted by hallucinogens, falls under the control of Nightmare in the "seriously bad acid trip" that ensues, and must be rescued by Dr. Strange. The emergence of Strange's brother, Vic, as the new Baron Blood, may also figure into the pairing.

Editor Mike Rockwitz, who will oversee SECRET DEFENDERS while continuing at the helm of DOCTOR STRANGE, reasons that the imminent changes in Strange's world will further move to integrate the hero. "My editing philosophy is that he's one of our best characters, and what we've done is tied him in with a lot more of the Marvel Universe characters," he said.

At the root of Doctor Strange's latest trial, Rockwitz explained, is his hesitance to join in a battle between powerful otherworldly forces, a battle "which would only last, in their humble estimation, 5,000 Earth years."

Largely because of his capped powers, however, Doctor Strange will himself have occasional need of super assistance. This furnishes the premise for SECRET DEFENDERS, a series proposed by Editor in Chief Tom DeFalco well before Doctor Strange's depowering was conceived, but which jibes quite nicely with the hero's present crisis.

DeFalco's vision, Rockwitz said, was to establish Doctor Strange as "the leader of a *Mission: Impossible*-type team," giving him license to summon various heroes according to his need and their respective abilities.

"Doctor Strange is going to be alerted to the situation at hand somehow with his remaining mystical powers, and he will do his best with whatever resources he has, to find people to combat this new menace," Rockwitz said. "He'll be the Peter Graves of Marvel Comics."

SECRET DEFENDERS will be written by DOCTOR STRANGE veteran Roy Thomas, himself a creator of the original DEFENDERS series back in 1972. Joining Thomas on the book are penciler Andre Coates, a Marvel newcomer, and SHIELD inker Don Hudson.

While adopting the old title's propensity for unorthodox action and character combinations, Thomas said, SECRET DEFENDERS will have a decidedly unique feel. As eclectic a group as the Defenders were in their earlier incarnation, the new team stands to be even more so.

"If [SECRET DEFENDERS] had a different name, people would be saying there's a vague resemblance to the old DEFENDERS and that's about it," Thomas said. "It'll carry on very much the idea of what the Defenders were before, that sort of a non-group group, except that then you had four or five regulars who didn't consider themselves a group. This time there really *isn't* a group. . .Doctor Strange gathers these heroes together on a sort of *ad hoc* basis. It really isn't quite like any other team book Marvel has done."

The closest approximation, in fact, would seem to be the 1990's brief but radical shakeup of the Fantastic Four, in which Ghost Rider, the Hulk, Spider-Man, and Wolverine signed-on with the group simultaneously. Readers of that storyline, left thirsting for material in a similar vein, are about to find satisfaction, in Rockwitz's assessment. "The cast can be forever changing," he said. "It will never be a stagnant team."

In the three- to four-issue story arcs which will typify SECRET DEFENDERS, Thomas plans to pit each loose assemblage of Strange-led heroes against everyday threats — threats which are "secret" inasmuch as they are not formed or addressed on a cosmic scale.

"I wouldn't say if Galactus is going to devour the Earth, the Secret Defenders wouldn't be there," Rockwitz said. "But if there was a problem involving drugs, mind control, the occult. . .the Secret Defenders and Doctor Strange would gather together and do their best to combat this menace.

"And it doesn't have to be a mystical menace," he added. "It can be gangland warfare that's affecting Doctor Strange's neighborhood or someone he knows, and it can involve the Punisher, Darkhawk. . .any character who's a streetwise, big guns type of guy. the possibilities are endless with this book."

While perhaps protecting a smaller portion of the Marvel Universe than he has in the past, Thomas said, Doctor Strange senses a hidden import in the efforts of the Secret Defenders. The lower-level corruptions they deal with are, in fact, part of a "rising tide of evil" sweeping the planet, a gradually-developing theme which readers will be able to chart toward critical mass as the storyline progresses.

This awareness will lend urgency to Strange's recruiting efforts, and will compound his frustration at not having power to call reluctant Defenders to his side. Even his former teammates will balk at the idea of regrouping.

"He can't just snap his fingers and bring them there against their will," Rockwitz explained.

All of which is fine with Thomas who, from his earliest days writing the character in the late '60's, has felt that Doctor Strange thrives when his mortality is emphasized. "There's always been this uneasy balance between the cosmic and the human" in Doctor Strange's adventures, Thomas said. "I tend to be more interested in the human."

- Tom Russo

"I'VE GOT YOU UNDER MY SKIN"

A LOOK AT THE VENOM LIMITED SERIES'

Villains have persistently captured the imagination of the public, in many cases more so than their heroic counterparts. Darth Vader often eclipsed Luke Skywalker, and Dr. Doom's popularity has always rivaled that of the Fantastic Four. This villainous tradition continues with Spider-Man's arch-foe, Venom.

"Venom is obviously extremely popular and the fans have expressed a great interest in seeing him in his own book," Danny Fingeroth, the current editor on the Spider-Man family of titles explained about the upcoming VENOM limited series. "We felt that the popularity and support that the fans have given Venom dictated doing something special."

"The VENOM limited series will be six issues," Danny continued, "which will take up the first half of 1993. The creative team will be Mark Bagley, and Sam DeLaRosa."

"The series will explore the character of Eddie Brock in relation to his own psyche," Danny revealed. "Why did Brock, of all people in the world, choose willingly to bond with the alien symbiote, whereas Spider-Man and anyone else who was ever exposed to the creature would not? The consequences of such an action," he continued, "would entail the permanent bonding of the symbiote to your body."

Although there would be some flashbacks concerning Venom's origin, Danny stressed that the material was new. "We will learn more about Eddie Brock's past and hint about Venom's origin, the origin of the alien symbiote," Danny explained, "but more importantly, we will see how Venom's relationship with Spider-Man has changed."

"LET'S CALL THE WHOLE THING OFF"

The reconciliation of Venom and Spider-Man's relationship will actually begin in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #374. Although VENOM #1 comes out the following week, its first issue leads to events in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #375, so there will be a lot of questions in VENOM #1 that will be unanswered until two weeks later in AMAZING #375.

"Spider-Man plays a major role in the first series," Danny revealed. "There are some loose ends from AMAZING #375 that Spidey and Venom will have to wrap up. . .some loose web-strands as it were. Spider-Man will be in every single issue of the first arc, and he will play a prominent role in the storyline."

There is a reconciliation that turns out to be strictly one-sided. "Venom will reconcile with Spider-Man, but Spidey will not reciprocate. Spider-Man will be devoting a good deal of his time hunting Venom down."

"CALIFORNIA IS THE PLACE Y'OUGHTTA BE"

To alleviate Spider-Man's constant pestering, Venom relocates to San Francisco where he will take up residence in a part of the city that was buried and abandoned after the great earthquake of 1906. There, Venom will amass a group of allies. "They're not Morlocks and they're not mutants," Danny explained, "although I will not rule out the possibility of some of them having super powers. They are kind of a sub-culture of various strange individuals," Danny continued. "They would have to be to associate with Venom." There will also be a group of renegade Guardsmen and relatives of Venom's victims who have united for the express purpose of destroying Venom.

But why San Francisco?

"David (Michelinie), who wrote the bible for the character, and I felt that if Venom was anywhere in the New York area, Spider-Man would spend his entire life searching for him. If he's 3,000 miles away, Spider-Man, at a certain point, would have to say, 'He could be anywhere; San Francisco, The Midwest, Canada, even Europe!' And remember, Venom can disguise himself as anything or anybody.

"There had to be some way to get them physically apart, so Spider-Man would not constantly be worried about Venom coming after Aunt May or Mary Jane," Danny said.

CRAZY FOR YOU — FUTURE PUNISHMENT

So can the readers expect a nicer, gentler Venom? "Not at all!" Danny stated emphatically. "Venom is not getting a governmental pardon or anything. He is still a villain. Venom's whole M.O. (Modus Operandi), his whole *raison d'etre* is that he sees himself as a hero, much as, say, Dr. Doom does. All the best Marvel villains see themselves as heroes. That's why they are so interesting.

"The key with Venom," he continued, "is much like that with The Punisher, actually, although Venom is even less selective about whom he kills. Venom often gets carried away. He is crazy."

Up to now, Venom's only aim has been to kill Spider-Man, and he would kill anyone who got in his way to do so. Yet, he would not pounce on Peter Parker in front of his family; Aunt May or Mary Jane," Danny added. "He does have some sense of justice and decency and rules of the game, although what that entails, only Venom knows."

This character instability is what Danny finds most appealing. "Venom is the king of rationalization," he explained. "If Venom needs money, I am sure he would not hesitate to rob a bank or break open an armored truck.

"Assuming that the series is popular," Danny said tongue-in-cheekedly, "There is a strong possibility of future limited series or even giving Venom his very own regular monthly book. I would love to see a future Venom storyline series featuring The Punisher," he continued. "In many ways the two characters are similar and in many ways they are different. They both fancy themselves as heroes who have the right to kill whomever they believe is bad. Yet there are essential differences. It would be interesting exploring those. A lot of writers and artists have expressed incredible interest in working with Venom, handing me story ideas. Right now, though, only this limited series is set."

"The VENOM limited series premiere issue will probably have a prismatic foil-enhanced cover," Danny revealed. "The plan now is to tie in VENOM #1, AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #375, WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #100 and SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #200 with special cover enhancements that will be related. Then, in the spring, we have a big crossover featuring Venom and Carnage, starting in the first issue of the SPIDER-MAN unlimited and continuing through three months of all the Spider-books and concluding in the second issue of the quarterly.

"I'm excited about the opportunity to be doing a series starring Spidey's deadliest villain," Danny concluded, "but I think the readers will be even more enthusiastic. This series solidifies Venom in the Marvel Universe, supplying the character with a supporting cast, a base of operations, and a new direction that will allow the fans to enjoy his involvement more and more in the future."

- Steve Vrattos

Hot Sheet

Happy Birthday to us! Happy Birthday to us! Happy Birthday Dear MARVEL AGE!!! Ten years old—well past teething and finally grasping the concept of multiplication, age ten is when the concepts of "past" and "future" begin to mean something. With that in mind, this special edition of "Hot Sheet" will fulfill its destiny as a crystal ball and take a look at the potential future of comic books.

Before we look ahead at where we might be going in this favorite entertainment industry of ours, Steve Snyder of Ohio-based *Central City Comics* reminds us that a glance in our rear-view mirrors is in order. "In 1982, when you walked into a comic shop, you were likely to find super hero comics and nothing but super hero comics. Oh sure, there was the occasional Archie or Disney book, but they were all drowned out by the flashing action of those guys in leotards battling it out. Of course, if you looked hard enough you might find a new idea in comics beginning to emerge. It was called Epic Comics.

Epic books brought to more adult entertainment in a broad spectrum of genres. Science fiction, fantasy, horror, and humor all became available in comics once more. The world of creator-owned comics came to life and with it the idea that comics might not be just for kiddies. Meanwhile, those guys in leotards continued to grow stronger. The fans couldn't seem to get enough of heroes like the X-Men, Ghost Rider, and the Punisher. They snapped up anything with their favorite characters."

Steve's history lesson indeed shows us where we've been, but how did we come to pass down that road? Buddy Saunders of *Lone Star Comics* points out that it was shop owners such as himself and his contemporaries, to which there are a growing number every day, that helped propel comics from the catch as catch can hobby days of the sixties and seventies to the die-hard readership of today. "Obviously the primary [industry trend of the last ten years] is the rise of the direct market. Virtually all other trends in comics — good and bad — are direct results of comics primary sales being through comic shops. Not long ago, it was tough for fans to read entire multi-issue storylines because of poor distribution through drug and convenience stores. Now, our more efficient distribution system keeps fans from dropping out of comics out of frustration."

With this vision of the last decade being part and parcel the formative years of modern comics—what, then, might the future hold? Said Editor Nel Yomtov, who has the best of both worlds (editing both for Marvel and Epic), "I see tomorrow being a continuation of the best that today's comics have to offer. There will be a proliferation of hard-edged characters with all-out action at a premium. There will be more characters —like Punisher—on the borderline between right and wrong. Also, some decades-old characters will probably be pushed to these same limits to keep them modernized and appealing.

"As for the material coming out of Epic," Yomtov continued, "it will still aim for growth in the adult-oriented market. However, Epic will look to capitalize on the lessons of

today—that action is what interests most readers. There will be more heavy-hitting adventure aimed at the older audience."

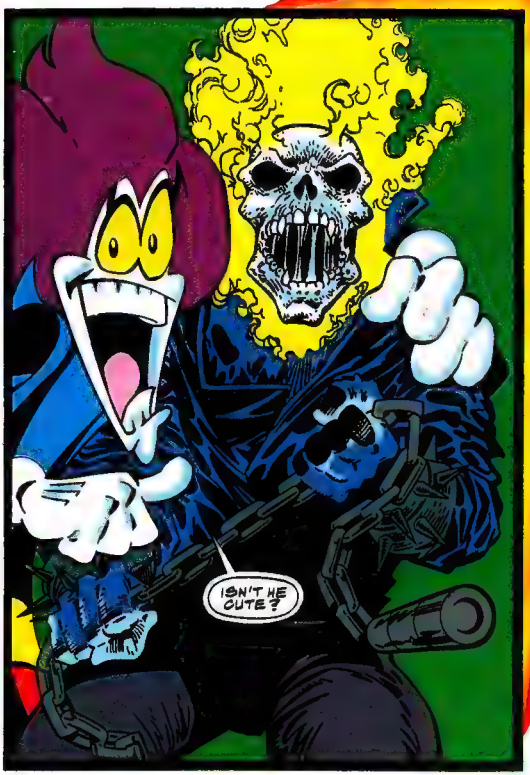
Epic Editor Marie Javins and her assistant Paula Foye see these trends not as the demise of the experimental material that the line has become famous for, but as an umbrella under which more experimentation will blossom. "Most publishing efforts will begin to concentrate their focus on action/adventure oriented material," Javins observed. "However, some projects will be allowed to push the boundaries of comics intellectually—both in form and content—while still staying true to the roots which Epic has put down over the last decade." Paula pressed this point through example. "To move away from the Beckett-like aspects of the depressing post-apocalyptic settings of some of today's comics, we'll see a move towards more light-hearted parodies of the very same themes that the new books replace. For example, LANCE BARNES: **POST-NUKE DICK** is more than just the same after-the-bomb story. It's meant to be funny, and it is!"

But if this is what the future holds, from where will the characters and ideas emerge when it comes to expanding the base of what comic enthusiasts read? Retailer Mike Raub of Connecticut's *Dream Factory* believes the answer to that question is hidden in the past. "As the saying goes, 'everything old is new again.' If you want to guess what the mainline characters of tomorrow will be, look at the stuff that is on the fringes of fan consciousness today, and that will tell us what'll be hot in the future. Comic creators, retailers and readers are adept at chasing our own tails and turning them into a new meal. Today's secondary characters will become the new favorites as creators and readers look for something new but familiar. Of course, there will always be the perennial big characters—the cast of X-Men and Spider-Man, for example—but the future is hidden somewhere close by already."

Editor Tom Brevoort, whose **DEATHLOK** series might just represent the first taste of this future, agreed to a point, but conceded that there is a need for new creations to infuse comics with its next breath. "It'll be tough to predict what the next trend will be. Cable started the 'Big-Guns' explosion and that was a pretty unpredictable event. For now, dark is in, but by tomorrow the more light-hearted stuff, like **SLAPSTICK**, may be in. Ultimately, there are too many forces that bear on comics to predict what the future holds. There may even come a time when some new companies force Marvel to work even harder to be better than we already are. Creatively, we will have to develop new characters and character types because, eventually, those which lend themselves to revivals and spin-offs will run out."

Marvel's Executive Editor in charge of Special Projects feels that comics creators will play a key role in the future and are ready to take on the challenge. "Comics in the last few years have seen a dramatic change in pacing and storytelling techniques," Bob Budiansky observed. "The readers now demand that things move at a more explosive clip. Other related media (movies, television) affect the perception of what people are looking for and, in response, creators are picking up the pace and expanding their concepts of what makes up a good story. This will intensify in the next decade and comics that don't keep up with the new frontrunners will fall by the wayside. We're living in an age where people expect to get their information in faster ways. Comics appeal to these same people, but to compete and increase our popularity, comics will have to move to the forefront of this fast-pace trend."

Ultimately, the aforementioned history, trends, and strivings point towards only one possible future—one filled with a lot of the best of everything! Steve Snyder sees this open field as a definite plus. "If current trends are any indication, diversity in [comic] genres will be commonplace. We have already recently seen



a tremendous growth in horror comics. Science fiction seems to be making major inroads and even the western is trying to make a comeback. Coming soon from Marvel will be non-fiction comics—the history of the Civil War will be explored and the world of dinosaurs will be revealed to eager readers. Can sports and biography comics be far behind?"

Shelton Drum of North Carolina's *Heroes Aren't Hard To Find* chain agreed that diversity will be the king of the next decade, not only in what goes into a comic, but how they are presented to the public as well. "There has been a lot of diversity over the last ten years, but it will change to encompass how we distribute and promote comics. Comics will cross-pollinate with other media to create new markets and creative avenues to explore. Also, diversity will mean that there will be a bigger pie for the genres to split, giving more room for the development of other things, and the market in which to test them."

Shelton actually gives us cause to further explore the future, not from the perspective of what will be in comics and how they are created, but how they are physically made and presented as well. "New technology will fuse with publishing, making for value-added comics," Drum predicted, "comics that will have intrinsic interest beyond the story being told. We see it now with bound-in trading cards, posters, etc. As technology advances, and as comics' relationship to other media grows, we will likely see things added to the comic package that will help propel other products into fans consciousness."

Bob Budiansky, who sees these other markets in relation to comics every day, agreed. "Recent years have seen an increase in many comic related products. Trading cards, for instance, retain some of the characteristics inherent in comics—art fused with words, all taken, adapted, or based on/from what already exists—but has allowed for a wider audience to be exposed to the medium. Other products, calendars and posters, for instance, which we have today, will open up the marketplace of tomorrow. We'll be seeing more of items like comic character based playing cards, greeting cards, and even comic specific accessories such as art and story-fused to backing boards, boxes, and bags."

Finally, the future may see a new, wider audience which will in turn have an impact on what we see on side of comics and on how they are presented. "Animation and its willingness to once again use comic book characters in its shows will bring more children into comics," Shelton Drum predicts. "These new shows, based on comics, will drive more people into wanting to be part of the comic book experience. It will then be up to publishers and retailers to bring them into the store and find out that there is a whole world behind what they see on the screen." Buddy Saunders of *Lone Star* also sees younger readers as the key to comics' prosperity. "We do know that now...a great many young readers are becoming comic readers for the first time. These younger fans are bringing a vitality and sense of excitement to comics..."

So, as the song goes, we believe the children are our future... high-tech, vicarious thrill seekers who will not hesitate to let the comic industry know what they want, and who will carry their love of comic books into their adult lives. The future looks bright from here.

- Jerry A. Novick

Send your letters to: **MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE**, c/o Marvel Comics, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. Attention correspondents: All letters to be considered for publication must include your complete name and address, though we will gladly withhold that info on request.

The title of this month's column comes to us from Chris Currie of Detroit, MI, and it's everything we like in a title—crisp, spicy, and only mildly greasy. Thanks, Chris! Before we dive into another month's mail, we just want to encourage the rest of you to send in some finger-lickin' good titles of your own. If we print them, we'll even thank you right here in black-and-white. And remember: we're going to be making a decision shortly about whether to keep rotating the title of this column or pick one title and stick to it. So don't delay; let us know what you think, okay? This month's first correspondent did:

Dear "Print It or Die,"

In #116, Stan Lee (by the way, keep up the good work, Stan) was talking about the original X-Men and, near the end, he said, "...and the Evil Mutants included Magneto, the Toad, and one other whom I can't quite remember..." Well, I checked my cards, and I believe that it is...the Blob (who first appeared in **X-MEN** #3) or Mastermind (**X-MEN** #4).

Oh, and I think you should do what you want with the title of the letters page.

Until the X-Men become normal, Make Mine Marvel!

Erin Clark
3434 Northcliff
Montreal, PQ
Canada H4A 3K7

Believe it or not, you've managed to hit *both* of the correct answers to Stan's question! Mastermind was, indeed, a member of the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants (along with Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, back before they reformed and joined the Avengers). However, since Stan also referred to the "third evil mutant" in his column, and the Blob first appeared in *THE X-MEN #3*, the Blob is good for a No-Prize, as well. So congratulations, Erin! And congrats to our other winners: Luke Hackenberg, Kurt Kuss, Ronald Cinell, Rock Carmean, Bryan Short, and Matt Menkevich. A bunch of mnifty, mnemonic Mno-Prizes are in the mail!

Actually, all this talk about winners is reminding us to introduce our *LETTER OF THE MONTH*, the lucky letter that we think is of sufficient interest to win a place of distinction. This time around, our Letter of the Month raises an issue that's been on our minds a lot lately —namely, the recent changes in *MARVEL AGE*.

Dear Masters of the New Age,

I am writing, as requested, in response to the new look of **MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE**, although I don't have that much with which to compare it. The only other issue I've read is #98, and I only purchased it because it had the Toxic Avenger (a personal favorite) on the cover.

I was browsing through the racks of comics a couple of days ago, looking for a comic book that I didn't already have and was interested in (there wasn't much selection). Then, in the back, I noticed an unfamiliar but interesting cover. It was only when I picked it up that I realized it wasn't a comic book at all, but a **MARVEL AGE** instead (with a cover that was obviously designed to stand out, and did its job well).

I am an amateur, teen-aged comics collector with interests in photography and journalism. I have been buying comics for a good number of years now, and this cover is by far my favorite of all time, and not only because I am interested in the "Rise of the Midnight Sons" storyline. The

graveyard setting for the photo is perfect; the subjects looked excellent in their shades and both the photographer and the artist did a masterful job. I really liked the idea of making the scene look as though it takes place at dusk instead of at night, as one would expect. I even liked the way that Ghost Rider's flames were being blown in the same direction as Mr. Kaminski's hair. What can't this monochromatic, Roger Rabbit style of cover be used more often in the comics world? I suggest trying it; you may start a trend.

I started reading on the first page (that's just the kind of person I am). After reading the good Mr. Saffel's editorial/introduction, I decided to give this newly reborn magazine the benefit of the doubt and read everything in it, even the articles that (only at first) I wasn't interested in.

To put my reaction into one word, I'd like to say that I was overwhelmed. (Now there's a nice, strong word, no?) The articles were fascinating, and the artwork used to decorate them was spectacular.

I especially liked the round table on the Midnight Sons, William Shatner's explanation of his new title, **TEKWORLD**, and the article by Clive Barker. I would like to comment on each of these individually, but I'm running out of time here.

I hope that you do experiment as you said you would, almost as much as I hope that the success of this magazine didn't exist solely because of the great material to write about and the excitement of a first issue.

You have made a new regular customer out of me.

Until (insert your own cute idea), Make Mine etc.

Scott Gastineau
(Address withheld by request)

Glad to have you along for the ride, Scott. And thanks for the feedback. In fact, we hope that everyone out there will follow your example and let us know when we're succeeding and when we're falling on our faces. What with all of the experimenting we're doing these days, your comments are even more important now than usual.

Dear MARVEL AGE,

Do you remember the Marvel Value Stamps from back in the '70's? At the time, a big deal was made of MVS #100, which I have been unable to find in my back-issue search. In what book did #100 appear, and who was on it?

Branford R. Posten
4075 E. River Road
Tucson, AZ 86718

Yup, Branford, we sure do remember the Marvel Value Stamps. In fact, to find the answer to your question, we had to pull out our own stack of the darned things.

For the sake of those who may not remember, Marvel Value Stamps were stamps that were carried in all Marvel Comics back in the mid-1970's. Readers were encouraged to cut them out and paste them in a special album. Those Marvelites who managed to collect all 100 were invited to a special gathering where they got to meet Roy Thomas and other prominent Marvel professionals of the time.

The final stamp, #100, was shrouded in mystery. Rumors abounded that it featured *all* of Marvel's heroes or even Stan Lee himself. In the end, #100 was devoted to everyone's favorite cosmic omnivore, Galactus. As for where it appeared, well...would you believe that, since we cut ours out almost twenty years ago, we can't remember? Guess that's what happens when you get older and the brain cells start dying.

Of course, that leaves the field open for those of you whose brain cells remain intact. If anyone does remember where the one hundredth stamp appeared, write in and let us know! We'll print your name and the info in this very space.

To Whom it May Concern,

I have been a comic book collector for five years now, and never before have I seen a better science fiction comic book than **TRANSFORMERS** (yes, it's the series that you suddenly canceled last year). I don't know if there are others who share my opinion, but I did not think of **TRANSFORMERS** as a kids' toy, but rather as an interesting story about robots who had more humanity than most humans nowadays. And the worst part was that you canceled the series when it was at its best, with great plots by Simon Furman and most excellent art by Andy Wildman and Stephen Baskerville. Just because Hasbro stopped making the toys,

that wasn't a reason to cancel the comic book, you know!

I, for one, hope that there is still a chance for another **TRANSFORMERS** series, or at least a limited series, a few stories in **MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS**, or a few specials (with Furman, Wildman and Baskerville, of course), because I think that the Transformers have stayed in limbo for far too long now. I hope you print this letter so other **TRANSFORMERS** fans like myself write to you and demand another chance for the Transformers.

Thank you for your time.

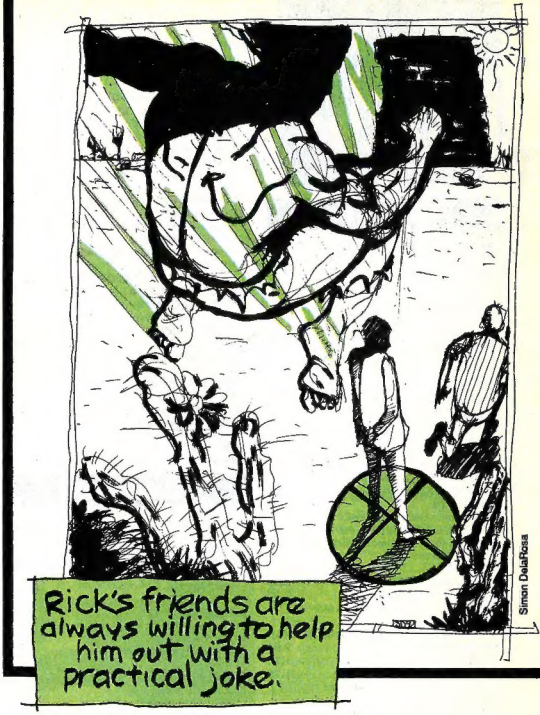
Jocelyn Cayolet
(Address withheld by request)

Actually, Jocelyn, we may have some good news for you before too long.

It seems you're not the only one who thinks the Transformers have spent enough time in limbo; Editor Rob Tokar recently met with some Hasbro representatives to discuss that very topic.

The upshot of the meeting? There will definitely be new Transformers toys coming your way in the future, and there just may be a new Marvel series to accompany them. It's too early to say whether the series will actually pan out, but you know which magazine to check for all the details as soon as they're available, right?

And speaking of characters who are "more than meets the eye," it's time to meet another undercover master of disguise in our monthly...



Yes, it's another foray into a smoky back alley to listen in as our favorite Wild Agents of Marvel turn up their collars, don some bushy false moustaches, and exchange high-priority secret messages. Remember, if you want to be a WAM Jammer yourself, simply write to us on official WAM stationary or include your WAM I.D. number in your letter.

Dear WAM Executives,

I really enjoy being a part of this spectacular club. I am a Marvel Zombie to the highest degree.

I have two small requests:

1) I haven't received a newsletter since the Winter newsletter, and now it is mid-July.

2) When I first signed up, your ad said there would be a way to get more stationery and a catalog to order items such as an X-Men watch (I love the X-Men). I was just wondering if this was still planned. I hope my questions will be answered.

Michael Edgell
Agent #02150
4623 W. Calavar Road
Glendale, AZ 85306

Well, Michael, we'll do our best. Here goes:

As we mentioned last issue, the quarterly WAM NEWSLINE newsletter is back on schedule: you should have received another newsletter by now, and the new winter issue is on its way (if it hasn't already arrived by the time you read this). How's that for service?

Turning to your second question, it's good news and bad news time. The bad news is that the plans for WAM merchandise have been delayed a bit, although we'll certainly let you know how things progress. On the other hand, the good news is that the next WAM NEWSLINE will carry an order form for all the WAM stationary your heart could desire.

And while (as always) our monthly tête-a-tête has been a ball, the bottom of the page is getting pretty close. So we'd better grab out black leather jacket, shotgun, and shades, and jump on our motorcycle to ride off for another month. Hasta la vista, babies. We'll be back.

checklist

FIRST WEEK

AVENGERS WEST COAST #91 1.25
Ultimate Ultron kidnaps Mockingbird.

CAGE #10 1.25
Cage battles an army of gun-toting adolescents.

CAPTAIN AMERICA #412 1.25
Cap poses as Crossbones.

DAREDEVIL #313 1.25

DARKHAWK #24 1.25
Evilhawk wrests control of the Darkhawk amulet.

MARVEL MASTERWORKS #23 $34.95

MARVEL MILESTONES:

UNCANNY X-MEN #1 2.95

MUTATIS #3 2.25
In the climactic chapter, Crane seeks a cure from the deadly virus.

NAMOR #35 1.25
Namor returns to Atlantis.

NIGHTSTALKERS #4 1.75

NOMAD #10 1.75
Nomad confronts the Red Wolf.

ORIGINAL GHOST RIDER #8 1.75
GR teams-up with Daimon Hellstrom, the Son of Satan.

PARAGON #1 4.99

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS 9.99

PUNISHER ARMORY #5 2.00
SCUBA gear, jet packs & Frank's safe-house.

PUNISHER & BLACK WIDOW: SPINNING DOOMSDAYS WEB 9.95

REN & STIMPY 3 1.75

SHE-HULK #48 1.75
Shulkie & Rocket Racoon battle the alien D'bari.

SPIDER-MAN 2099 #4 1.25
Miguel faces a new enemy — the Specialist.

TERROR INC. #8 1.75
Terror grants a mobster's dying holiday wish.

TOMB OF DRACULA: REQUIEM FOR DRACULA 2.00
Re-presenting TOMB OF DRACULA #69 & 70.

UNCANNY X-MEN #297 1.25
The X-Men count coup in the X-cutioner's Song aftermath.

WCW WRESTLING #11 1.25
The conclusion to, "Halloween Havoc."

WEAPON X HARDCOVER 19.95

WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #97 1.25
The formation of a new Sinister Syndicate — the New Enforcers.

WOLVERINE: INNER FURY 5.95
— by D.G. Chichester and Bill Sienkiewicz.

SECOND WEEK

AKIRA TPB #7 16.95
Collecting AKIRA #19-21 in one edition.

ALPHA FLIGHT #117 1.75
Northstar confronts X-FORCE's Kane.

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #374 1.25
Venom goes after Peter Parker's parents.

BARBIE #26 1.25

DARKHOLD #5 1.75
Rev. Styge attempts to ressurect the Punisher's family.

DEATH'S HEAD II #3 1.75
The creator of the Sapphire Lotus wants it back.

GHOST RIDER #34 1.75

GROO THE WANDERER #99 2.25
The penultimate chapter to "The Wager of the Gods."

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY #33 1.25

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #121 1.50
Wolverine/Venom, Mirage, Andromeda, Ghost Rider/Cloak & Dagger.

MARVEL COMICS TRY-OUT BOOK 19.95

PENDRAGON II #8 1.75
The Knights struggle to save the Arachne.

PUNISHER WAR ZONE #12 1.75

QUASAR #43 1.25
Quasar returns to the land of the living.

RAVAGE 2099 #3 1.25
Ravage travels to the evil island, Hellrock.

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #206 2.25

SHADOW RIDERS #1 (of 4) 1.75

SILVER SABLE #9 1.25
Sable's origin is revealed.

SILVER SURFER: THE FIRST COMING OF GALACTUS 5.95

SLEEPWALKER #21 1.25
Rick & Sleepy exchange bodies.

SPIDER-MAN/DR. STRANGE: THE WAY TO DUSTY DEATH 6.95

WOLVERINE #66 1.75
Logan travels to Russia in search of his past.

WONDER MAN #18 1.25
Wondy loses control of his powers.

THIRD WEEK

AVENGERS #359 1.25
The Avengers must save Arkon's world.

CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER #19 4.95
A cursed family is rescued from a hereditary hell.

CLIVE BARKER'S NIGHTBREED #24 2.25
The search for a new Midian begins.

CONAN #265 1.25
Conan & Isparana battle the wizard, Karlik.

DOOM 2099 #2 1.75

EXCALIBUR #62 1.75
The final confrontation between Phoenix & Galactus.

FISH POLICE #5 1.25
Inspector Gill tries to watch TV.

G.I. JOE #133 1.25

HELL'S ANGELS #8 1.75

INCREDIBLE HULK #402 2.25
The Hulk takes command of the Pantheon.

LIFE OF CHRIST #1: THE CHRISTMAS STORY 2.99

MARVEL AGE #121 1.00
Features included REN & STIMPY and the upcoming MyS-Tech war.

MARVEL MILESTONES:

GIANT-SIZE X-MEN #1 2.95

MARVEL TALES #270 1.25
The introduction of the Puma.

MARVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW '92 3.95

MORBIUS #6 1.75

NICK FURY

AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D. #44 1.75
Nick fights a horde of dead S.H.I.E.L.D. agents.

NIGHTBREED #23 2.25

PUNISHER #75 1.25

SLAPSTICK #4 1.25

SPIDER-MAN #31 2.95

WARLOCK & THE INFINITY WATCH #13 1.75
Drax seeks out his past in Nevada.

WHAT IF #46 1.25

X-FACTOR #87 1.25
Val orders the team to have a psychiatric exam.

X-MEN #17 1.25

X-MEN ANIMATION #4 1.25
Magneto battles Prof. X in a contest of will.

FOURTH WEEK

A-1 #3 (of 4) 5.95
Five quirky new stories by some of Britain's quirkiest creative minds.

DEATHLOK #20 1.75

DIGITEK #3 (of 4) 1.95

THE INCOMPLETE DEATH'S HEAD #2 (of 12) 2.50

INCREDIBLE HULK: FUTURE IMPERFECT #1 (of 2) 5.95

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #122 1.50
Wolverine/Venom, Speedball/Rage, Knights of Pendragon, Ghost Rider/Cloak & Dagger.

MARVEL REQUIRER #35 Free!

MOTORMOUTH & KILLPOWER #9 1.75

NEW WARRIORS #32 1.25

PUNISHER 2099 #1

SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #197 1.25

TEAM HELIX #2 (of 4) 1.75

WILLIAM SHATNER'S TEK WORLD #6 1.75
The Tek-Lords want Beth dead.

X-FORCE #19 1.25

FIFTH WEEK

BARBIE FASHION #26 1.25

DEATH'S HEAD II/KILLPOWER: BATTLETIDE #3 (of 4) 1.75

DR. STRANGE #50 2.95

FANTASTIC FOUR #373 1.25

IRON MAN #289 1.25
The return of Tony Stark.

MARVEL UNIVERSE HANDBOOK #27 4.95
Including bios of Beta Ray Bill, Pip the Troll, Green Goblin & Wonder Man.

MOON KNIGHT #47 1.75
A dying MK seeks his replacement.

THE MAN #77 1.75
Ed Marks reports the Vietnam war action aboard an aircraft carrier.

PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #51 1.75

SILVER SURFER #77 1.25

SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE #7 1.75
The return of Steel Vengeance.

THOR #459 1.25
Introducing a new hero — Thunderstrike.

VENOM #1 (of 6) 2.95
Guest-starring Spider-Man.

WARHEADS #9 1.75
The Warheads launch an assault on Mephisto.

X-MEN CLASSIC #80 1.25

LIMITED SERIES

DEATH'S HEAD II/KILLPOWER:
BATTLETIDE #3 OF 4 1.75
The gladiator tournament is not going well for the good guys.
DIGITEK #3 OF 4 1.95
A battle royal against the Baccilicons.
THE INCOMPLETE
DEATH'S HEAD #2 OF 12 2.50
Re-presenting the original series.
INCREDIBLE HULK:
FUTURE IMPERFECT #1 OF 2 5.95
The Hulk battles his alternate future self.
SHADOW RIDERS #1 OF 4 1.75
A motley crew of mystically-powered motorcyclists.
SLAPSTICK #4 OF 4 1.25
The city is under siege by a nuclear-powered hobo.
TEAM HELIX #2 OF 4 1.75
The villainous of Venom's first limited series..
VENOM #1 OF 6 2.95
The premiere of Venom's first limited series.

SPECIAL COVERS

INCREDIBLE HULK:
FUTURE IMPERFECT #1 5.95
The Hulk travels to the future in style with an embossed cover.
PUNISHER #75 1.25
75th anniversary special with embossed cover and silver-metallic ink.
PUNISHER 2099 #1 1.75
Foil-stamping adorns this "future" premiere.
VENOM #1 OF 6 2.95
The limited series premiere features a prismatic foil cover.
WOLVERINE: INNER FURY 5.95
This bookshelf's cover features metallic ink.

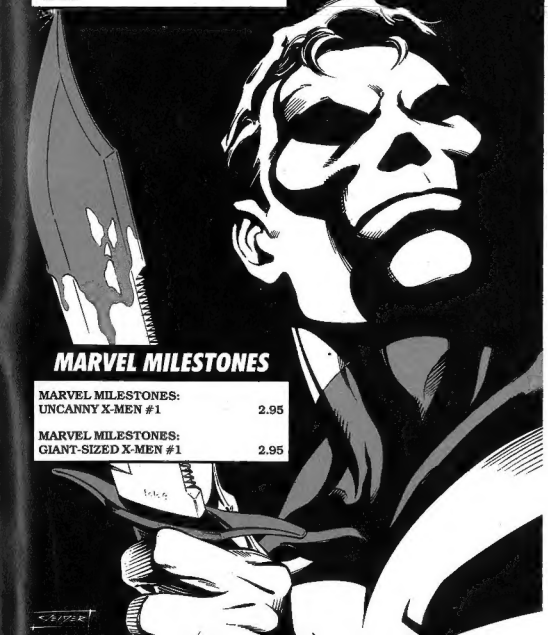
MATCHES OF THE MONTH

ALPHA FLIGHT #117 1.75
Weapon Omega vs. Wyre
DARKHOLD #5 1.75
Ghost Rider vs. Punisher
DEATHLOK #20 1.75
Deathlok vs. Coldblood
DEATH'S HEAD II #2 1.75
Death's Head vs. Wolverine
DOOM 2099 #1 1.75
Doom vs. Rook Seven
DR. STRANGE #50 2.95
Dr. Strange vs. Dormammu
EXCALIBUR #62 1.75
Phoenix Vs. Galactus
INCREDIBLE HULK #402 2.25
Hulk vs. ??????????
IRON MAN #289 1.25
Iron Man vs. The Living Laser
MORBIUS #6 1.75
Morbius vs. the Basilisk
NIGHTSTALKERS #4 1.75
The Nightstalkers vs. D.O.A.
SLAPSTICK #4 1.25
Slapstick vs. the Neutron Bum
WARLOCK &
THE INFINITY WATCH #13 1.75
Drax the Destroyer vs. the Hulk

PREMIERES

PARAGON #1 4.99
Teenager Andy Prentiss, is mysteriously endowed with incredible power.
PUNISHER 2099 #1 1.75
When his family is murdered, policeman Jake Gallows dons a new identity.

PUNISHER #75



MARVEL MILESTONES

MARVEL MILESTONES:
UNCANNY X-MEN #1 2.95

MARVEL MILESTONES:
GIANT-SIZED X-MEN #1 2.95

BOOKS & SPECIAL COMICS

MARVEL COMICS TRY OUT BOOK 19.95
Giant-sized guide to breaking into comics—and an instant portfolio!
MARVEL MASTERWORKS #23 39.95
This 272-page hardbound collection re-presents classic Stan Lee/Steve Ditko Dr. Strange stories.
MARVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW '92 3.95
A 48-page tongue-in-cheek recap of major events in the Marvel Universe.
THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS 9.99
A 96-page trade paperback version of the classic morality tale.
PUNISHER & BLACK WIDOW:
SPINNING DOOMSDAY'S WEB 9.95
A 48-page graphic novel in which the unlikely pair must defuse an A-Bomb.
SILVER SURFER:
THE FIRST COMING OF GALACTUS 5.95
Re-presenting Galactus & the Surfer's first FANTASTIC FOUR appearances.
SPIDER-MAN/DR. STRANGE:
THE WAY TO DUSTY DEATH 6.95
A 64-page bookshelf special.
WEAPON X TPB 19.95
128-page hardcover graphic novel re-presenting the Weapon X storyline.
WOLVERINE: INNER FURY 5.95
All-new 48-page bookshelf adventure by D.G. Chichester & Bill Sienkiewicz.

GUEST APPEARANCES

CAPTAIN AMERICA #412 1.25
Shang-Chi, The Master of Kung Fu
DARKHOLD #5 1.75
Ghost Rider & The Punisher
DEATH'S HEAD & KILLPOWER:
BATTLETIDE #3 OF 4 1.75
Wolverine, Psylocke & Hercules
DIGITEK #3 OF 4 1.95
Deathlok
DR. STRANGE #50 2.95
Ghost Rider, The Hulk & Silver Surfer
FANTASTIC FOUR #373 1.25
Silver Sable & The Molecule Man
GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY #33 1.25
Dr. Strange
HELL'S ANGELS #8 1.75
Psylocke
INCREDIBLE HULK #402 2.25
Doc Samson
MOTORMOUTH & KILLPOWER #9 1.75
Cable
NEW WARRIORS #32 1.25
Spider-Man, Archangel & Dr. Strange
NICK FURY
AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D. #44 1.75
Captain America
PENDRAGON II #8 1.75
Spider-Man
SHADOW RIDERS #1 OF 4 1.75
Ghost Rider & Cable
SHE-HULK #48 1.75
Rocket Racoon
SILVER SURFER #77 1.25
Jack of Hearts
SLAPSTICK #4 1.25
Ghost Rider, Captain America, Speedball & The Fantastic Four
SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #197 1.25
The X-Men
SPIDER-MAN 2099 #4 1.25
Doom 2099
TEAM HELIX #2 OF 4 1.75
Wolverine
VENOM #1 OF 6 1.75
Spider-Man
WARLOCK &
THE INFINITY WATCH #13 1.75
The Hulk
WOLVERINE #66 1.75
The X-Men
WONDER MAN #18 1.25
Avengers West Coast